



# Somewhere safe to go”

Young people’s experiences of  
leaving detention

*A Voices of Young People in the Youth Justice System Project Report*



## CONTENT WARNING:

This project is about the experiences of young people in Tasmania’s youth justice system. Some of their experiences include references to family violence, drug use and abuse. Some young people used strong language to describe these experiences. Readers might find the content of this report distressing. The services listed below can be contacted for support:

- **1800 RESPECT:** 1800 737 732
- **Family Violence Counselling Support Service:** 1800 608 122
- **Blue Knot (childhood and complex trauma support):** 1300 657 380
- **13YARN for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:** 13 92 76
- **A Tasmanian Lifeline:** 1800 984 434
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800
- **Tell Someone website:** [tellsomeone.tas.gov.au](https://tellsomeone.tas.gov.au)

# Acknowledgment of Country

The Interim Commissioner acknowledges and pays respect to the Palawa people of Lutruwita/Tasmania as the original and ongoing custodians of this land and for the more than 40,000 years they have cared for their Country and their children. The Interim Commissioner recognises that Aboriginal people are best placed to determine and deliver services to meet the needs of their children.

## Other Acknowledgments

The Interim Commissioner thanks the young Tasmanians with experience of the youth justice system who have bravely shared their stories for this report. Their unique insights and views inform the advocacy of the Office of the Commissioner on behalf of all children and young people in the state. The Interim Commissioner would also like to thank the staff of the Department *for* Education, Children and Young People (and the former Department of Communities) and non-government organisations for supporting young people to participate. Many thanks to the external reviewer who provided helpful feedback during the planning for this work.

## Adverse Comment Process

Section 21 of the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016* (Tas) provides that the Commissioner is not to include any comment in a report that is adverse to a person unless that person has had at least 15 working days to make representations to the Interim Commissioner before the report is finalised. The Interim Commissioner provided this report to the Department *for* Education, Children and Young People on 31 October 2024, and the Department for Premier and Cabinet on 24 December 2024. The then Acting Secretary of the Department *for* Education, Children and Young People responded on 2 December 2024, advising that no representations would be made. The Acting Secretary of the Department for Premier and Cabinet responded on 17 January 2025, also advising that no representations would be made.

Commissioner for Children and Young People (Tas) 2025. *"Somewhere safe to go" - Young people's experiences of leaving detention*

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Any questions regarding this report or the work of Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People more generally may be directed to the Interim Commissioner by emailing [childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au](mailto:childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au) or by telephoning +61 3 6166 1366.

For more information, visit: [www.childcomm.tas.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au)



**“Somewhere safe to go” - Young people’s experiences of leaving detention** is part of the *Voices of Young People in the Youth Justice System (Voices Project)* report series.

## Introduction

The *Voices Project* promotes and empowers young people with recent lived experience of the Tasmanian youth justice system to share their views on this system.<sup>1</sup> By working with young people to share their views about what contact with this system can be like for children and young people, this project provides critical insights into the system’s impact on children and young people in Tasmania. The *Voices Project* informs the Interim Commissioner’s ongoing systemic advocacy about the reforms needed to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in Tasmania.<sup>2</sup>

The *Tasmanian Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy* sets out 6 key domains for child and youth wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> All 6 domains—*Being loved, safe and valued, Having material basics, Being healthy, Learning, Participating, and Having a positive sense of culture and identity*<sup>4</sup>—underline the importance of supporting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people when they leave detention.

1. *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016* (Tas) s 8(1)(e).

2. See, eg, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Submission to Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania, Tasmanian Government, *Reforming Tasmania’s Youth Justice System Discussion Paper* (21 March 2022); Commissioner for Children and Young People, Tasmania, *The Age of Criminal Responsibility in Tasmania* (Memorandum of Advice, July 2023).

3. Tasmanian Government, *It Takes a Tasmanian Village* (Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, August 2021).

4. *Ibid.*

A lack of effective throughcare support, including transition planning and continuity of care for young people leaving detention, has previously been identified as an issue of concern.<sup>5</sup> The critical importance of throughcare has been recognised by the Tasmanian Government in the context of its youth justice reform agenda.<sup>6</sup> Pleasingly, the Government has also accepted the recommendations of the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (the *Commission of Inquiry*) to establish an integrated throughcare service for children and young people in detention.<sup>7</sup> However, implementation of the integrated throughcare service is not expected until 2029.<sup>8</sup> This project, together with ongoing independent advocacy for children and young people in detention<sup>9</sup>, further underlines the pressing need for a 'throughcare approach that commences service planning at the earliest possible opportunity and follows the young person's engagement with youth justice services'.<sup>10</sup>

This report shares the views of young people with a youth justice experience about what it is like for children and young people in Tasmania to leave detention, including how young people may feel upon release, and the importance of ongoing support after leaving detention.

5. Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, *Listen, This is my voice: Young people's experiences of the youth justice system* (Report, 2023); Save the Children, *Putting Children First: a rights respecting approach to youth justice in Australia* (Report, April 2023); Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, Submission to Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania, *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System Discussion Paper* (21 March 2022) 50-51; Justice Reform Initiative, *State of Incarceration: Tasmania's Broken Criminal Justice System* (Report, April 2021).

6. The Blueprint outlines the government's 10-year plan to keep children and young people out of the youth justice system: State of Tasmania, *Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034* (Report, December 2023).

7. Tasmanian Government, *Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust: Government Response to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (December 2023) 216-217 (Recommendations 12.24 and relatedly 12.22(d)).

8. Tasmanian Government, *Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust: Government Response to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (December 2023) 216-217. See also, Tasmanian Government, *Recommendation status* (webpage) <<https://keepingchildrensafe.tas.gov.au/recommendation-status/>>. Of note, the related recommendation, Recommendation 12.22(d) which provides for the development and establishment of partnerships with community organisations to create employment and training opportunities for children and young people leaving detention, is currently underway and implementation is expected by July 2026.

9. Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016 (Tas) s 8(1)(b).

10. State of Tasmania, *Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034* (Report, December 2023). See also, Commissioner for Children and Young People, *Nowhere else to go: Young people's views on homelessness* (Report, 2024); Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Children who have experienced child protection, youth justice and homelessness* (Report No 6, 2023) 162; Mental Health Council of Tasmania, *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System* (Discussion Paper Response, March 2022).



## How we did the voices project

More information about why and how we did the *Voices Project* is available here:

<https://childcomm.tas.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Youth-Voices-Methodology.pdf>

Note, to protect their privacy, the real names of young people who shared their views with us as part of the *Voices Project* are not used.

# The role of the Commissioner for Children and Young People

The Commissioner for Children and Young People advocates for all Tasmanian children and young people and has a special function to advocate for individual young people detained under the *Youth Justice Act 1997*.<sup>11</sup>

The Commissioner promotes good practice, policy, and legislation by influencing decision-making, undertaking research, monitoring, publishing reports, providing advice to ministers and government agencies, undertaking investigations, and making submissions to inquiries and reviews. In exercising these functions and powers, the Commissioner considers the rights of the child under the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (the *Convention*) to ensure the wellbeing and best interests of children and young people are paramount.<sup>12</sup>

Extensive advocacy has emphasised that culturally safe and integrated throughcare services are an essential part of an effective youth justice system.<sup>13</sup> Such services are critical to meet and safeguard the best interests of children and young people when leaving detention. This is grounded in their rights, the evidence, and the individual experiences of children and young people shared in the context of the Commissioner's individual advocacy function.<sup>14</sup>

The Government's acceptance of the *Commission of Inquiry's* recommendation to establish an integrated throughcare service for children and young people in detention (Recommendation 12.24, shown at Table 1) and the related recommendation to develop and establish partnerships with community organisations to create employment and training opportunities for children and young people leaving detention (Recommendation 12.22(d), Table 2) are welcome steps in the right direction. However, implementation of an integrated throughcare service must be expedited to ensure that children and young people leaving detention have access to services and supports which provide continuity and consistency of provision.<sup>15</sup>

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11. *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016* (Tas) s 8(1)(b).

12. *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2016* (Tas) s 3(1)(b).

13. See, eg, Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, Submission to Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania, *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System Discussion Paper* (21 March 2022) 9-10, 50.

14. Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, Submission to Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania, *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System Discussion Paper* (21 March 2022) 50.

15. Tasmanian Government, *Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust: Government Response to the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (December 2023) 216-217; see also Tasmanian Government, *Change for Children* (Consultation Draft) 35-36.

# Rights Insight

All children are entitled to the rights set out in the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*.<sup>16</sup>

These rights are about ensuring their protection, provision and participation. Articles relevant to a child's right to receive supports when leaving detention include:

**Article 2** of the Convention states that every child is entitled to all the rights in the Convention, regardless of who they are, what they believe, or their family's situation. No child should face discrimination for any reason.

**Article 3** says that when adults make decisions, they must consider how it affects children. The well-being of children should be a primary consideration, and governments must ensure they are properly cared for.

**Article 4** notes that governments must take all necessary steps to ensure that every child can fully enjoy their rights under the Convention.

**Article 6** says that every child has the right to life. It is the responsibility of governments to make sure that children develop and grow up healthily, protected from harm.

**Article 9** states that children should only be separated from their parents if they are not being properly cared for. If parents do not live together, children have the right to stay in contact with both, unless it's harmful.

**Article 12** says that children have the right to express their views on matters that affect them, and adults must take their views seriously.

**Article 19** says that governments must protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, and neglect by those responsible for their care.

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16. *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child*, opened for signature 20 November 1989, (entered into force 2 September 1990) art 40(4). Note, several other international human rights treaties and declarations are relevant here including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT); the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT); the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

**Article 24** states that children have the right to good health, healthcare, clean water, nutritious food, and a safe environment. Everyone should have access to information on how to stay healthy.

**Article 26** says that governments should provide support to children from low-income families to ensure their wellbeing.

**Article 27** says that every child has the right to adequate food, clothing, and a safe home. Governments should help families provide a decent standard of living.

**Article 28** of the Convention states that all children have the right to education, and if they need extra help, the government should provide it.

**Article 31** states that children have the right to rest, play, and take part in cultural and creative activities.

**Article 37** says that children accused of breaking the law must not experience torture or other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment, and children should not be imprisoned for life or placed in adult prisons. Detention should be a last resort and for the shortest possible time. Children in detention should have legal help and stay connected with their families.

**Article 39** says that if a child experiences harm, neglect, or abuse, the government must help them recover physically and emotionally, and to reintegrate into society, in a safe, caring environment.

**Article 40** says that children accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment, with options to reintegrate into society. Detention should be a last resort.

# Background: Children and young people leaving detention in Tasmania

Children and young people who leave detention may face a range of challenges.<sup>17</sup> These challenges are often exacerbated by a lack of effective throughcare support including access to a safe and appropriate home and care, mental health support, alcohol and drug treatment, and education transition support, among others.<sup>18</sup>

17. Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, *Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children Volume 5: Children in youth detention Book 3* (August 2023), 149; Sentencing Advisory Council, *Sentencing Young Offenders* (Research Paper No.6, October 2021) 63-67; Moore, T., McArthur, M., & Saunders, V. (2013). Young People Talk about Transitioning from Youth Detention to the Community: Making Good. *Australian Social Work*, 66(3), 328-343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2012.752020>

18. Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, *Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children Volume 1: Summary, recommendations and findings* (August 2023), 128; Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, Submission to Secretary, Department of Communities Tasmania, *Reforming Tasmania's Youth Justice System Discussion Paper* (21 March 2022) 50.



## **Data Insight:** Number of releases of children and young people from detention in Tasmania<sup>19</sup>

Data provided by the Department for Education, Children and Young People shows that there were 63, 116 and 139 releases from Ashley Youth Detention Centre in 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 respectively. Over this period, the majority (69 per cent) of releases were to bail. The second most common reason for release was the completion of sentence (15 per cent). The Department did not provide data disaggregated by other reasons for release.

19. Of note, the data provided by the Department are for number of releases, rather than the number of unique young people released from detention during the indicated periods. Some young people may have experienced release more than once during the above periods.

Currently, the Tasmanian Government directly delivers or funds a range of services and programs for children and young people experiencing challenges, including homelessness, and complex behavioural and mental health issues.<sup>20</sup> Although the Government, primarily through the Department of Justice Community Youth Justice team, provides some ongoing support to young people who leave detention, case management support has traditionally only been available to those young people subject to a formal supervision order, such as probation, community service or supervised release.<sup>21</sup> For those young people not under an order, or for whom the period of supervision has ended, there is only one community-based program that is specifically funded to support children and young people leaving detention.<sup>22</sup>

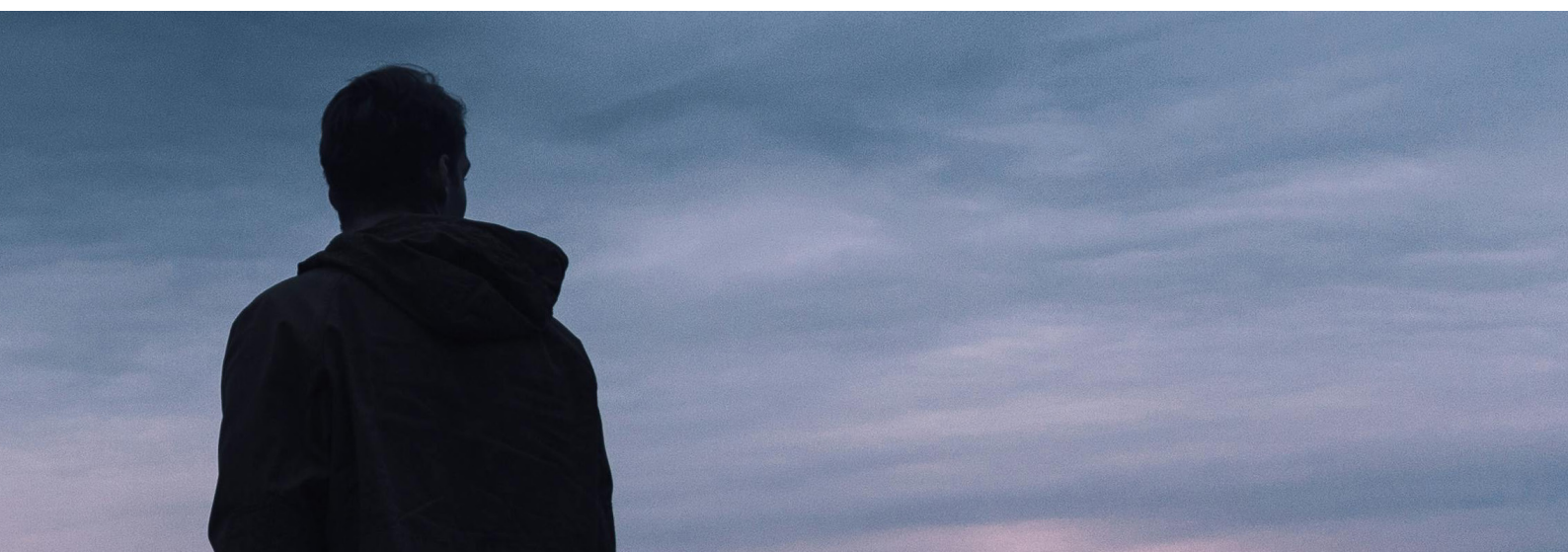
Over the next 10 years, the Tasmanian Government, through the *Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034*, intends to implement a contemporary, integrated and therapeutic youth justice service that responds to the recommendations of the *Commission of Inquiry*, including Recommendation 12.24 and Recommendation 12.22(d).<sup>23</sup>

20. Examples include, Under 16 Lighthouse Project (for young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness); Youth2Independence (Y2I) Program (supported accommodation options for young people at risk of homelessness); Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) now the *Child and Youth Mental Health Service (CYMHS)*; Step Up Program (for young people using violent behaviour in the home); PAST Program – Problem Sexualised Behaviour and Sexual Abusive Behaviour (for children and young people displaying ‘harmful sexual behaviour’) and Targeted Youth Support Service (provided by Mission Australia).

21. Of note, the Office of the Commissioner is aware of emerging innovative case management practice being piloted by the Government for young people in contact with the young justice system beyond the traditional case management model.

22. Run by a small team at 54 Reasons, REBOOT is a state-wide voluntary mentoring program offering some young people between 10-17 years old bail supports or support to transition back into the community following a period of detention. Through referrals (including self-referral) a team of four Youth Specialists engage with young people in the community and in detention providing them with a range of support from ‘practical assistance’ through to ‘address[ing] barriers impacting on their wellbeing and support them towards independence’. See further, 54 Reasons, *54reasons REBOOT Tasmanian Youth Justice Program* (Flyer); Save the Children, *A chance to Reboot* (October 2023) <<https://www.savethechildren.org.au/our-stories/a-chance-to-reboot>>.

23. Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government’s Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, *Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children Volume 5: Children in youth detention Book 3* (August 2023). For further description of the Government’s response, see Tasmanian Government, *Change for Children* (Consultation Draft) 35-36.



**Table 1: Commission of Inquiry Recommendation 12.24**

The *Commission of Inquiry* recommended that the Tasmanian Government should:

- a.** establish an integrated throughcare service for children and young people in detention that
  - i.** begins exit planning as soon as possible after a child or young person enters detention for the provision of safe and stable accommodation, access to physical and mental health support, and assistance with education or employment after release to facilitate their reintegration into the community
  - ii.** provides increased access to the detention facility for staff of community based providers of post-release services
  - iii.** adopts a collaborative, child-centred, cross-organisation approach involving child protection, housing, health, disability support and education services, supported by a memorandum of understanding and clear policies and procedures
  - iv.** involves the child or young person and, to the greatest extent possible, their parent, guardian or other significant adult in exit planning
  - v.** includes post-release wraparound support services for children and young people
  - vi.** is culturally safe for Aboriginal children and young people
- b.** deliver community-based schooling options for children and young people with complex behavioural challenges, including those who are or have been involved in the youth justice system, to provide appropriate learning environments for children to transition to when they leave detention.

**Table 2: Commission of Inquiry Recommendation 12.22(d)**

The *Commission of Inquiry* recommended that the Tasmanian Government should:

- a.** ...
- b.** ...
- c.** ...
- d.** develop and establish partnerships with community organisations to create employment and training opportunities for children and young people leaving detention

Some of the actions under the *Youth Justice Blueprint 2024-2034* have commenced, including work to develop a Youth Justice Model of Care across the youth justice service continuum. This will comprise services for children and young people when they leave, or transition, from detention.<sup>24</sup> The implementation timeline to establish services for children and young people leaving detention, is 1 July 2029 with the exception of the development and establishment of community partnerships under Recommendation 12.22(d). Notably, just \$1.25 million has been allocated in the 2024-2025 budget to begin establishing the transition from detention services.<sup>25</sup>

While the Government's timeline for implementing an integrated throughcare service aligns with the *Commission of Inquiry's* recommendation,<sup>26</sup> the current experiences of children and young people leaving detention—along with the lack of effective transitional measures<sup>27</sup> — underscores the need to prioritise the delivery of integrated throughcare services for children and young people who are leaving detention now, and over the next several years.

24. Tasmanian Government, Youth Justice Model of Care (December, 2024). See also, Tasmanian Government, Youth Justice Model of Care: Implementation Plan (December, 2024).

25. Tasmania, Estimates Committee A, House of Assembly, 27 September 2024, 55 (Roger Jaensch, Minister for Children and Youth).

26. *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings*, Who was looking after me? Prioritising the safety of Tasmanian children Volume 8: Oversight, coordination and therapeutic support (August 2023) 310.

27. For example, transitional measures include: the use of a care team model at AYDC that includes exit planning and active consideration by DECYP how to support the transition of children and young people from detention to independence as part of the proposed Youth Justice Facilities Model see further Tasmanian Government, Keeping Children Safe and Rebuilding Trust: Government Response to the Report of the *Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings* (December 2023) 217. Additionally, the Government has made efforts to streamline intensive case management for some children and young people in, or leaving, detention among others.



## What we heard

Young people may feel unprepared when leaving detention.

Leaving detention can be disorienting, with life on the outside feeling unfamiliar.

Many young people do not have safe accommodation options after they leave detention.

Young people need and value supportive relationships after they leave detention.

The transition out of detention is made more difficult when assistance to complete essential paperwork to receive services or support to find employment is unavailable.

If appropriate community-based supports are lacking, young people may be more likely to engage in harmful behaviours after they leave detention.



### What needs to change

Young people need safe and supported accommodation and care options after they leave detention.

Young people need flexible and sustained support services that meet their individual needs after they leave detention.

Young people leaving detention may need a range of supports, assistance with material basics, such as food, hygiene items, and other necessities, through to help to find employment and accommodation.

## Listen, learn and act: The views of young people

**“Somewhere safe to go”** is about young people’s views on leaving detention, and what this experience can be like for young people.

## “Everything doesn’t feel real”: Young people’s experiences of leaving detention

Young people described how life in detention feels very different to life on ‘the outside’ with some young people feeling unprepared to leave detention.

While the experience of leaving detention was described by some young people as exciting, Bailey explained that the initial excitement of leaving detention is often replaced with a feeling of unease.

*Young people that are not used to being there, they’re thinking oh, yeah, I’m getting out. I can’t wait to get out and go run amok and go do this with my boys and that. But... you’re just not used to getting out. It just doesn’t feel right...*

**(Bailey, 18)**

Adding to this point, Stevie described how young people can feel disorientated when they leave detention, explaining that the experience of detention can make the outside world feel unfamiliar.

*When you leave detention it's - everything doesn't feel real. You've got to get used to the real world again because when you're in detention you forget about everything on the outside...*

**(Stevie, 15)**

Explaining why some young people may have these kinds of experiences when they leave detention, Bailey spoke about how young people experience a complete lack of autonomy while they are in detention.

*You ask people to go to the toilet, you ask people to get a drink. You literally have to ask everyone - like the workers for everything that you want. You can't just walk up and grab the controller for the Play Station. You can't just walk in and turn the TV on... you can't just pick a movie you want to watch...*

**(Bailey, 18)**



## **“When you’re on your own, you don’t know how”:** Young people’s views about what can happen if there is a lack of support after leaving detention

Young people explained that a lack of support after leaving detention can lead young people to engage in further harmful behaviour and even end up in detention again.

Stevie described how young people without ‘somewhere to go’ may try and return to detention.

*[Young people] might just try and get themselves locked up again on purpose. Because at least then they have somewhere to go.*

**(Stevie, 15)**

Bailey explained that even if young people did have somewhere to go, if they did not feel safe there, they may spend time around people who harm them or lead them to engage in further harmful behaviour.

*When I got bailed to [supported accommodation] multiple times, I knew in my head that yeah, I’m definitely going to go back to ice and I know I’m going to go steal a car. I know I’m going to go do evades and everything else that I done. That’s one of the reasons why I don’t like being here because I know that if I live here... yeah, I know for a fact I’m going to see someone that I know from back in the day or someone that’s got a problem with me and yeah, just something will end up happening.*

**(Bailey, 18)**

Jack explained that where young people have supportive family and other relationships, this may mean that they have the support they need, but if they do not, the situation can be very difficult for them.

*I would suspect that people with families and other mutual relationships, would be more or less fine, but for those who aren’t it’s a bit more vicious...*

**(Jack, 19)**

Lucas talked about a lack of support for a young person for everything from getting a Medicare card,

*...When you're on your own, you don't know how to get Medicare cards, shit like that. You think, fuck, what am I going to do? You know what I mean? You don't know people, you've got to call up to get it or stuff like that.*

through to finding a job after leaving detention.

*...You don't understand how long I tried and tried to get a job this time I was out... it was fucking ridiculous, man... just the paperwork to get the job, like my reference, stuff like that. I don't know any idea how to get all that or stuff like that.*

**(Lucas, 18)**



# “They get out and they have nothing”: What needs to change

Young people shared how important it is to have somewhere stable and safe to live after they are released from detention. Bailey and Stevie observed that a lot of young people experience homelessness and have nowhere else to go.<sup>28</sup>

*An actual stable accommodation where they know they're not going to [get] kicked out from or somewhere that they can obviously be fed and that.*

**(Bailey, 18)**

*What do you think young people need when they leave detention?*

**(Facilitator)**

*Somewhere safe to go to.*

**(Stevie, 15)**

*Why is that so important?*

**(Facilitator)**

*I don't know. Because if they don't, they're only going to end up locked up again if they have nothing to look forward to.*

**(Stevie, 15)**

28. See also Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania, *Nowhere else to go: Young people's views on homelessness* (A Voices of Young People in the Youth Justice System Project Report, 2024).

Liam described his experience of leaving detention without a place to go (other than the tent he was given by a service), and what he thought would make things better for other young people.

*Having more support for children. Not doing what [the Child Safety Service] do to cunts like me saying, when we're locked up, they will have a house ready for us... then the night before you get out, they say, we've got nowhere... not releasing someone for a year into a tent, that generally didn't really work.*

**(Liam, 16)**

Jack shared his thoughts on how a young person could continue to be supported when a youth justice supervision order ends.

*I think that one's exit from the program [youth justice supervision order] should be judged on their workers own personal belief that they will be okay outside the program... they are the ones that experience that person firsthand, and I think having a mandatory program exit thing is - for some part ripping that support out is going to affect a lot of people. Because they're expected, once you exit the program, you're just up and gone, that's it... at a minimum I would say flexibility on when someone should be exited, but at best I think giving the worker who has experienced that child or young person the most, the authority themselves to believe when that person should be safely in - is ready to be exited from the program.*

**(Jack, 19)**

Support in the form of material basics was also mentioned as something that could help young people to get back on their feet.

*Well, at one point they were handing out all these bags with like Mars Bars and water, just conditioner and soap. You need that for people like [young person] and that right, because they get out and they have nothing.... it was a big relief to them because they don't got to go out and steal it.*

**(Lucas, 18)**



# Conclusion

This report, **“Somewhere safe to go”**, shares the views of young people with a youth justice experience about what it is like for children and young people in Tasmania to leave detention, including how young people may feel leading up to and upon release, and the importance of ongoing support after leaving detention.

Through the *Voices Project*, young people shared that they can feel unprepared when leaving detention, and the experience can be disorientating for them. Young people need safe and supported accommodation options after they leave detention, and these often are not available. Young people also need supportive relationships, and that not having access to support services that meet their needs – from material basics through to help to find accommodation and employment – can lead young people to engage in harmful behaviour.

The Tasmanian Government’s acceptance of the *Commission of Inquiry’s* recommendation to establish an integrated throughcare service for children and young people in detention, and the related recommendation, acknowledges that the current experience of children and young people leaving detention is inadequate. While the Government has made some effort to improve the current situation by systemising and streamlining intensive case management, this work remains underdeveloped.

Culturally safe integrated throughcare services are an essential part of an effective youth justice system. In recognition of the rights of children and young people under the *Convention*, and to realise the Tasmanian Government’s own vision for a Tasmania in which ‘all children and young people ‘grow and thrive’, the establishment of an effective throughcare model for children and young people leaving detention (and indeed across the service continuum) cannot come soon enough.

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