



MEDIA RELEASE

4 July 2017

Comment from the ACT Human Rights Commission President Dr Helen Watchirs Re: allegations of human rights abuses against young people at Bimberi in The Canberra Times today.

“The ACT Human Rights Commission has a number of regulatory and oversight mechanisms that we are using to investigate the allegations of human rights abuses at Bimberi.

The Human Rights Commission has initiated a review of Bimberi practices including the use of force and strip-searching. The review is ongoing and we expect it to be completed later in 2017. We note the use of ‘squat and cough’ strip searching has been discontinued as a result of the Commission’s intervention.

We encourage any witnesses to incidents of the nature described in The Canberra Times article to contact the Human Rights Commission confidentially to assist us to further investigate those claims.

We note that Bimberi staff have obligations to report any instances of abuse to ACT Child and Youth Protection Services so they can be fully investigated.

The Human Rights Commission has not been advised of allegations of racial abuse of young people at Bimberi but view these issues with concern. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Bimberi have the right to equality and to have their culture valued and respected.

Any young person who has experienced racial or other abuse within Bimberi can raise these concerns with the Public Advocate or any member of the Human Rights Commission by telephone or during our regular visits to Bimberi. They can also contact us after they have left detention.

We encourage any young people and their families who have concerns about their treatment at Bimberi to contact the Human Rights Commission so we can advise them of their rights and options for pursuing remedies.

The ACT Public Advocate and Children & Young People Commissioner is co-chair of the Youth Justice Blueprint Taskforce. In this role she is overseeing reform and improvements to the ACT youth justice system.

The Human Rights Commission will be working with Community Service Directorate to deliver targeted human rights training to frontline staff at Bimberi.

The Human Rights Commission also works closely with other oversight agencies such as Official Visitors for Children and Young People that visit Bimberi regularly.”

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