
From: Human Rights Justice Action [REDACTED]

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Subject: Computers in Cells Success for Youth Detainees

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Ms Anne Hollonds
National Children's Commissioner

Australian Human Rights Commission

Dear Commissioner,

We are writing to inform you of the recent developments regarding the provision of computers in cells to youth detainees.

The NSW Minister for Youth Justice Mr Jihad Dib has agreed to provide youth detainees with computer tablets by the end of the financial year. Please see the Community Justice Coalition's [media release](#) attached below.

Access to computers in cells presents diverse avenues for personal growth and development. Specifically, digital technology would assist the education, social connections and mental well-being of youth in detention. It would enable communication with families, loved ones and elders from their cells through managed device access. It would be a channel for online counselling with external specialist providers and individually selected educational programs, including art and music.

The current [national recidivism rate stands at 85%](#), with [88% of those](#) identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The introduction of computers will allow for the preservation of cultural and familial ties, an aspect of immeasurable significance for Indigenous children. Thus, extending digital device access to youth within your jurisdiction, will reduce the alarming recidivism rates.

The CJC has carefully examined the costs for this proposal ([see here](#)). For a prison of 600, to install a server with security software will cost \$230,000 with an annual maintenance expense of \$120,000. Unlimited video and audio calls would cost \$1 a month per prisoner. However, for youth detention centres with a smaller population, the costs would be lower.

Across Australia, the average cost per young person in detention is [\\$990,000 per year](#). Supporting them with effective services is in everyone's interests.

We seek your support in this initiative. By assisting the rapid adoption of the technology, you will be able to provide youth in detention centres with positive influences that lessen the isolation of imprisonment.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

Coordinator

JUSTICE ACTION

Unit 10/2 Catherine St, Glebe,

NSW 2037

PO Box 386, Broadway NSW 2007

T 02 9283 0123 [REDACTED]

E

[REDACTED]

<http://www.justiceaction.org.au>

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Media Release November 17, 2023

“The

NSW Minister for Youth Justice, Jihad Dib, was questioned during Budget Estimates on the provision of computer tablets to youth detainees. His Department said they will be provided by the end of the financial year [\(p72.7\)](#).

This is a promising move by Youth Justice showcasing their commitment to positive change. Youth will now join adults with this essential reform that will help lower rates of [recidivism](#)”

said the Community Justice Coalition President, The Hon John Dowd AO KC.

“They were questioned about detainee violence resulting in long term segregation [\(p42\)](#).

Overseas research has indicated a 60% reduction of violence against staff after providing tablets and

[recently](#)

[published research](#) for adult NSW prisoners shows

the same trend. Instead of being isolated in their cells most of the time, they will now have access to family, music, education, and other services” said Mr Dowd.

“Youth

Justice said they have 42 psychologists for the 212 detainees [\[p42.8\]](#)

offering 1 hour a week [\[p53.9\]](#).

However these psychologists are seen by the detainees as having a conflict of interest – they are engaged by management in decisions and yet need openness from detainees for counselling. By providing access to culturally appropriate external counsellors, via

the tablets in the cells, a greater level of trust could be created as well as continuity of service after release” said the Community Justice Coalition Vice

President, The Hon Elizabeth Evatt AC.

“The department was asked about the increased cost of \$800 per day per detainee over the previous year’s expenditure of \$2,700 a day ([p63.8](#)). The reason given was it was due to ‘food, costs of living, electricity’ ([p72.9](#)). The total cost is almost \$1m a year ([p63.8](#)) for each young person in detention. The need to put more resources into proven diversion and justice reinvestment programs is clear” said Ms Evatt. “Minister Dib supported peer mentoring. He stated that, ([p48.5](#)) ‘One of the great stories was that there was a young person who, as a result of the Try a Trade day course, got, I think, a plumbing apprenticeship upon his release... That young kid actually ended up getting...a scholarship and he’s now at university. He’s actually changing his life and he wants to do youth leadership and youth mentoring.’ We look to building social support, using positive role models to reduce youth recidivism from its current level of [63.1%](#), rather than locking up young people, 61% of whom are Aboriginal” said Mr Dowd.