

Don Dale 'a fire hazard'

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New youth detention centre riddled with safety issues

THE existing Don Dale Detention Centre is riddled with safety issues, poses a fire hazard and does not comply with public health requirements, according to a leaked report.

An Expert Panel Report, prepared for the former Henderson Labor Government in 2010, shows the old Berrimah jail was deemed unsuitable for future modification and reuse.

Despite the damning report, the facility has been used to house youth detainees since 2015. They were moved there by the former CLP Government following the forced closure of the old Don Dale

Detention Centre.

The report, obtained by Sky News, lists a host of hazards that make the facility unsuitable for reuse. These include:

- THE buildings not complying with the national building code;
- CELL and fire safety issues in all prisoner accommodation areas;
- THE accommodation areas not complying with legislative requirements for public health;
- A HIGH possibility of contaminated material on the site and in the building fabric;
- AN inadequate fire detection system that does not comply with current codes, and;

tion system that does not comply with current codes, and;

• CRITICAL site infrastructure for water, fire and electrical assessed as being near the end of its economic life.

The report says the facility's security system is adequate "although various components are at the lower end of capability and functionality".

The maximum security B block — now known as the High Security Unit — is rated a high risk in each of five assessment categories used.

Chief Minister Michael Gunner yesterday said the Berrimah facility was the best

option available to house youth detainees for now.

"It's not the best facility, it's the best facility we have and that's where we kind of are at the moment," he said. "We are spending a little bit of money there to make sure it's safer."

The Northern Territory Government has committed to building a new facility but is waiting for the Royal Commission into Youth Detention to report before finalising plans.

Mr Gunner said he was hoping the Royal Commission's interim report — to be delivered on March 31 — would advise on a way forward.

"It would be helpful if it had guidance in this area but whether it does or not, as a government we have said we will keep working on this issue," he said.

"This is a live issue. This is a current circumstance facing Territorians, facing Territory kids and as a government we have to show action."

The Government has allocated \$15 million for a new Darwin facility and \$7 million for Alice Springs.

But it is expected the Federal Government will be asked to help fund the new facilities. "I do believe that there

should be good conversations between the Territory Government and Federal Government on delivering on the outcomes of the Royal Commission," Mr Gunner said.

The report also recommended the former Labor Government build a new 75-bed youth justice facility when it built the new Holtze prison.

It suggested this would cost about \$52 million, but this recommendation was ignored.

Gerry McCarthy, who was the corrections minister during this period, has previously said the Government planned to build a new youth justice facility after the 2012 election

Mr McCarthy will face the commission on Friday.

Voller 'pushed the boundaries'

HAYLEY SORENSEN

HIGH-PROFILE teen criminal Dylan Voller received exceptional treatment while in youth detention, the royal commission into youth justice in the Northern Territory has been told.

Emails from 2012 tendered to the commission yesterday outline an incident in which a juvenile justice officer attempted to send Voller to his room after he told her to "get f***ed".

But another officer told her not to bother. "Any other kid would get sent to his room, but not Dylan," he was reported to have told her.

The incident "reinforced in Dylan's mind that he could push the boundaries and get away with anything with little to no consequence", according to the first officer's email to officer in charge Derek Tasker.

Later that day, Voller threatened to "bash" two other children. According to the documents tendered, the same officer made inappropriate comments to detainees, including Voller.

He is alleged to have talked to detainees about "dildos and vibrators" and said to one boy: "you just want to touch my dick. You're gay".

The commission heard allegations of sexual misconduct by a guard towards both male and female detainees.

Former NT youth detention acting general manager John Fattore said complaints had been made about the casual worker's "flirtatious behaviour" towards a detainee.

Mr Fattore said complaints had been made that in 2008, the man had told two male detainees he would let them conduct a strip search of a female detainee.

Other complaints were made that the man made numerous remarks about the size of one boy's genitalia, and that he commented that female detainees were old enough to consent to sex.

These complaints only came to the attention of the department's professional standards unit when a female youth worker reported the man for sexually assaulting her.



Screen shots from CCTV footage taken from inside Dylan Voller's cell

Picture: SUPPLIED / ROYAL COMMISSION

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