

People deprived of liberty continue to face systemic risks

Today the Australian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) have released their Annual Report highlighting systemic challenges affecting people deprived of their liberty.

Across jurisdictions, NPM monitoring under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) identified gaps between expected standards and conditions experienced by people deprived of their liberty.

'Australia's NPM provides a critical platform for accountability and visibility, designed to protect those most vulnerable in our community. The risks of harm to vulnerable children and adults deprived of their liberty are extremely high without independent and adequately resourced monitoring, said Iain Anderson, NPM Coordinator.

Common themes across jurisdictions included high rates of deaths in custody, poor conditions for people deprived of their liberty, infrastructure and capacity constraints, and barriers to accessing healthcare, rehabilitation, education, and community connection.

Within youth justice, concerns included the continued use of isolation, an unacceptably low minimum age of criminal responsibility, and reliance on detention beyond a measure of last resort. Changes to bail laws and limited alternatives to custody are increasing reliance on detention and placing further pressure on already stretched youth justice systems.

'Increases in deaths in custody, including among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, underscore the ongoing relevance of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the need to strengthen safeguards across all detention settings,' added Mr Anderson.

The report presents insights from monitoring activities during the period 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.

OPCAT strengthens transparency and accountability through independent monitoring of deprivation of liberty, helping prevent torture, ill-treatment and other forms of harm before they occur.

The full Australian NPM annual report is [available on our website](#). For more information visit ombudsman.gov.au or for media enquiries email media@ombudsman.gov.au.