

Commonwealth NPM finds guidelines needed for vessels with detention facilities

The Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) conducted 3 visits of Australian Maritime Border Command (MBC) vessels in May and June 2025 to inspect the conditions of detention facilities on board.

While the follow up visit to the ADV Besant found significant improvements, the HMAS Cape Pillar and the ABFC Cape York had significant differences in the management of people in detention. This is despite the Cape Class patrol boats being fitted with identical purpose-built detention facilities.

'Not having standard practices to manage people in detention could result in very different experiences, despite both vessels being under the command of MBC and both vessels effectively undertaking the same tasks,' said Commonwealth Ombudsman, Iain Anderson.

Significant differences in the management of people in detention between the HMAS Cape Pillar and the ABFC Cape York, depended on which agency controlled the vessel. This included the length of time a person may be held in detention on each vessel, access to services including medical assessments and the food served to people in detention.

The NPM made a total of 3 recommendations which included the Department of Home Affairs developing a suite of standard guidance for officers and crews across all vessels under the command of the MBC, undertaking a review of all detention facilities on all vessels, reviewing communication tools, and ensuring there are guidelines on the maximum length of time people can be held in detention.

Significant improvements were made to ADV Besant's onboard detention facility, including the installation of modular accommodation units, and new toilet and shower facilities. These changes have addressed many of the [serious concerns raised during an October 2024 visit](#).

The full post visit summary is available on the [Commonwealth Ombudsman website](#).

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