



Commonwealth
National
Preventive
Mechanism

Post Visit Summary

Adelaide Immigration Detention Centre

October 2026

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Summary

Our visit

The Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) conducted an announced visit to Adelaide Immigration Detention Centre (AIDC) on Wednesday 27 May 2026. A concluding meeting was held with onsite operational Australian Border Force (ABF) personnel and Service Provider management.

During this visit we focused on the following issues:

- transition to the new detention services provider
- care and management of people detained long-term
- progress with approved renovations.

Methodology

The Commonwealth NPM visits places of detention to:

- monitor the treatment of people in detention and the conditions of their detention
- identify any systemic issues where there is a risk of torture or ill-treatment
- make recommendations, suggestions, or comments promoting systemic improvement.

Humane treatment in detention is a central safeguard that helps ensure accountability, lawful behaviour and protection of human rights. Safe, lawful and humane conditions help prevent abuse, neglect, and exploitation, while also reducing the risk of torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

The Commonwealth NPM conducts three types of visits: announced, unannounced, and semi-announced. The type, location and timing of each visit is determined by the Commonwealth NPM alone.

Each place of detention is observed in terms of its performance based on the management and conditions for people in detention. We assess these against the 5 indicators of a healthy detention facility, adapted from those used by other international and domestic visiting bodies.

The five indicators of a healthy centre are¹:

Safety	people in detention are held in safety and consideration is given to the use of force and disciplinary procedures as a last resort
Respect	people in detention are treated with respect for their human dignity and the circumstances of their detention
Purposeful activity	the detention facility encourages activities and provides facilities to preserve and promote the mental and physical wellbeing of people in detention
Wellbeing and social care	people in detention are able to maintain contact with family and friends, support groups, and legal representatives, and have a right to make a request or complaint
Physical and mental health	people in detention have access to appropriate medical care equivalent to that available within the community. Stakeholders work collaboratively to improve general and individual health conditions for people in detention

What we found

We did not identify any serious concerns against the five indicators of a healthy detention facility during the visit to AIDC. The security situation appeared to be well-controlled, and no significant concerns were raised with we about safety. The facility was clean and well-maintained and provided adequate conditions of detention in both accommodation and common areas.

We observed respectful interactions between staff and people in detention and examples of effective communication and engagement. The programs and activities

¹ These indicators have been adapted from expectations used by international and domestic inspectorates.

available appeared to be sufficiently varied and engaging to ensure adequate purposeful activity for people in detention. We observed that measures were in place to support wellbeing and social care, including access to request and complaints processes. We also considered that the services delivered through the onsite health clinic appeared to be adequate to meet the physical and mental health needs of people detained at AIDC.

However, we did hear concerns about the impact of a new directive requiring more frequent use of mechanical restraints and increased staffing presence during transport and escort activities. Staff reported to us that people in detention had raised concerns about the negative impact of the use of restraints on their wellbeing. Staff also raised concerns about the impact of the directive from an operational perspective, noting that the staffing footprint at AIDC on any given day could be reduced by one-third if an external transport and escort activity was required.

Excepting these concerns, we considered that the treatment and conditions observed by us at AIDC did not give rise to significant risks of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.

Recommendation

I recommend the following:



Recommendation 1

In consultation with facility staff, the Department of Home Affairs should review the impact of the new transport and escort directive on staffing at smaller immigration detention facilities, with a view to ensuring that staffing levels are sufficient to meet transport and escort security requirements while also maintaining adequate service delivery to people in detention.

Iain Anderson

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism



Facility & demographics

AIDC is a small, long-established immigration detention facility located in suburban Adelaide. The centre is a purpose-built facility that houses people in detention in four separate accommodation blocks in one compound. The facility transitioned from an immigration transit accommodation facility to a higher-security immigration detention facility in mid-2023 and is one of six purpose-built immigration detention centres in the immigration detention network.

The AIDC has a capacity of 37 people with additional accommodation available at an Alternative Place of Detention (APOD) that is primarily used for women, families and people who are apprehended in transit and due to be removed from Australia within a short period of time.

At the time of the visit, there were 19 people detained at AIDC from 13 different nationalities, all of whom were men. This included people who had been detained due to visa cancellations on character grounds, asylum seekers and visa overstayers. Around 40% of the people detained at AIDC at the time of the visit had been in detention for longer than 6 months, although none had been detained for longer than 2 years.

Table 1: Length of detention for people held at AIDC, 31 May 2026²

Length of time in detention	Number
0 to 1 Month	5
1 to 2 Months	2
2 to 3 months	0
3 to 6 months	4
6 to 12 months	3
1 to 2 years	4

² [Immigration Detention and Community Statistics Summary 31 May 2026](#)



Observations

Safety

At the time of the visit, we observed that the atmospherics at AIDC were calm and the security situation appeared to be well-controlled. We did not identify any immediate safety or security concerns, and people in detention who spoke with us did not raise significant concerns about their personal safety.

We observed that service provider staff were present and visible throughout the facility, with several officers situated in the common areas observing activity and available for engagement with people in detention. We noted this presence of staff added to the positive atmospherics of the facility.

However, we heard from staff that people in detention had expressed concerns about the increased use of mechanical restraints during transport and escort activities. At the time of the Commonwealth NPM's visit to AIDC, the Department of Home Affairs (the Department) had recently issued a new directive on security requirements for transport and escort activities. This directive was introduced in response to an escape during a transport and escort activity involving a person detained at the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre. Among other things, the directive required more frequent use of mechanical restraints, increased staffing presence during transport and escort activities, and attendance of Incident Response Team (IRT) staff for some activities.

Staff reported that people in detention had described feeling uncomfortable and distressed about these changes, when they had previously been escorted without the same level of restraint and without as many staff being present. Some reported that they had delayed or cancelled offsite allied health appointments due to concerns about the use of restraints.

Staff also raised concerns about the impact of the directive from an operational perspective. The larger number of staff required for transport and escort activities has a disproportionate impact on facilities such as the AIDC, which have a smaller pool of staff from which to draw in order to meet the new requirements. Staff expressed concern that the diversion of staff for transport and escort activities reduced the number of staff available onsite, noting that the staffing footprint at AIDC on any given day could be reduced by one-third if an external transport and escort activity was

required. This in turn impacted staff capacity to provide adequate service delivery to people in detention. As some people detained at the AIDC at the time of the visit attended weekly external appointments, this situation could arise on a regular basis. Staff also flagged challenges in meeting requirements for IRT attendance during transport and escort activities, noting the lack of IRT staff onsite at AIDC and the limited availability of training for staff to upskill as IRT officers.



Recommendation 1

In consultation with facility staff, the Department of Home Affairs should review the impact of the new transport and escort directive on staffing at smaller immigration detention facilities, with a view to ensuring that staffing levels are sufficient to meet transport and escort security requirements while also maintaining adequate service delivery to people in detention.

Respect

We observed respectful interactions between staff and people in detention at AIDC. During interactions with people in detention, we noted that the general disposition of those detained at AIDC appeared to be more positive and less marked by significant distress compared to what the Commonwealth NPM had observed at other detention facilities in recent times. While this is likely related to the shorter average length of detention at AIDC (noting that none of the people detained at AIDC at the time of the visit had been in detention for longer than 2 years), it could also be indicative of a more positive culture at the facility.

We observed that the facility was clean and well-maintained, with no obvious hazards or significant damage or disrepair evident. Rooms within accommodation compounds were adequate in terms of size, bedding, lighting, ventilation and climate control. Shared bathrooms were clean, had appropriate amenities and afforded sufficient privacy. Furnishings and facilities in common areas clean, comfortable and in good condition.

Exercise and recreation facilities included gym equipment (with formal gym sessions offered as part of the programs and activities schedule), a small outdoor green space suitable for walking and running, and a volleyball court. We considered that these

facilities provided adequate access to fresh air, exercise and outdoor recreation for people detained at AIDC.

We received an update from facility staff on progress with approved renovations. The renovations will include modifications to the health clinic to afford greater privacy and provide a larger space for private consultations; introduction of a secure and appropriate canteen space; and introduction of a centrally located control and administrative management centre for the detention service provider. We considered that these renovations, once completed, would improve the amenity of the facility (particularly the health clinic). The Commonwealth NPM will continue to monitor progress with the renovations during future visits.

Purposeful Activity

We considered that the programs and activities available at AIDC at the time of the visit provided adequate purposeful activity to people in detention. Activities included art and craft activities, discussion groups, language lessons, social engagement, physical activity, self-improvement classes (such as conflict resolution classes) and guidance sessions facilitated by a social worker. Organised activities were offered daily and some activities were available for evening sessions.

We observed that facilities and equipment for activities were well-maintained and adequate for the size of the facility. We also had the opportunity to observe people in detention participating in a discussion group. The subject matter, interactivity and level of participation by people in detention suggested that it was a meaningful and engaging activity.

Compared to the programs and activities observed during visits to other recent visits to immigration detention facilities, we considered the offerings at AIDC to be among the better examples of purposeful activity across the detention network. We noted that the intentional focus on wellbeing was a particularly positive feature of the programs and activities schedule at AIDC, and that staff demonstrated a clear understanding about the importance of wellbeing in a detention context.

Wellbeing and Social Care

We observed evidence of effective communication about rights and responsibilities for people in detention. Induction booklets for people entering the facility were available

digitally in an accessible format and in hardcopy, in a variety of languages. Posters with relevant information – including contact details for legal services and human rights organisations, information about expectations in detention, and guidance on visit processes and using telephones – were displayed throughout the facility in prominent places, again in a variety of languages.

We noted the availability of clearly marked complaint and request forms with instructions in common areas across the facility, including translated forms in languages appropriate for the current cohort.

Staff advised us that access to religious services and engagement is provided on a weekly basis and delivered by members of faith-based services or local religious organisations. Staff further advised that a religious liaison officer would soon be joining the staff team with a view to enhancing access to religious and cultural services and engagement for people in detention.

Physical and Mental Health

As in other purpose-built detention facilities across the immigration detention network, physical and mental health services at AIDC are delivered through an onsite health clinic with a focus on primary nursing. The health clinic also offers a regular schedule of health promotion sessions and provides support for specific health issues, including smoking cessation programs and other programs to address addiction and unhealthy behaviours.

We considered that the services delivered through the onsite clinic appeared to be adequate to meet the physical and mental health needs of people detained at AIDC. We also noted that the programs and activities schedule (described in further detail above) contributed to promoting positive physical and mental health through providing opportunities for regular exercise and through an intentional focus on wellbeing.

Progress against previous recommendations

The Commonwealth NPM did not make any recommendations following its previous visit to AIDC.

The Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism Mandate

The *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (OPCAT) is an international human rights treaty designed to strengthen the protections for people deprived of their liberty and potentially vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse.

OPCAT does not create new rights for people who are detained, rather it seeks to reduce the likelihood of mistreatment. OPCAT combines monitoring at an international level (by the Subcommittee for the Prevention of Torture) and by National Preventive Mechanisms (NPMs) at a domestic level.

NPMs are independent visiting bodies, established in accordance with OPCAT, to examine the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty, with a view to strengthening their protection against torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment.

An NPM is not an investigative body. The mandate of an NPM differs from other bodies in its preventive approach: it seeks to identify patterns and detect systemic risks of torture and ill-treatment, rather than investigating or adjudicating complaints.

The Australian Government announced the Commonwealth Ombudsman as the visiting body for Commonwealth places of detention (the Commonwealth NPM) in June 2018.

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OFFICIAL

Our Ref: EC26-005275

Your Ref: fA175258

Mr Iain Anderson
Commonwealth Ombudsman
GPO Box 442
Canberra ACT 2601

Iain
Dear Mr Anderson,

Thank you for your correspondence of 14 September 2026 and the draft *Adelaide Immigration Detention Centre Post Visit Summary*, reporting on the Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism's May 2026 visit. The Department values the Commonwealth Ombudsman's role in supporting transparency and continuous improvement across Australia's immigration detention network.

The Department has carefully considered the recommendation contained in the Post Visit Summary. We acknowledge the potential for transport and escort security arrangements to impact on service delivery at smaller immigration detention facilities if appropriate staffing levels are not maintained. The Department agrees with the recommendation and welcomes the opportunity to further strengthen operational practices in this area.

The Department's detailed response to the recommendation is provided at **Attachment A**.

Thank you again for providing the Commonwealth NPM's observations and recommendation. I look forward to the Department's continued constructive engagement with your office.

If your office has further questions in relation to this matter, [REDACTED], is best placed to assist. Alternatively, you are welcome to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Stephanie Foster

9 October 2026

OFFICIAL

Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman – Post Visit Summary – Adelaide Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) May 2026

Recommendation 1 – In consultation with facility staff, the Department of Home Affairs should review the impact of the new transport and escort directive on staffing at smaller immigration detention facilities, with a view to ensuring that staffing levels are sufficient to meet transport and escort security requirements while also maintaining adequate service delivery to people in detention.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 1

The Department has reviewed and clarified the April 2026 transport and escort security direction in response to concerns raised in the recommendation that frequent use of mechanical restraints may affect detainee health and wellbeing. The revised direction confirms that restraints are not automatic and may only be used where required by an Escort Security Risk Assessment (ESRA).

Transport and escort decisions are informed by the ESRA which consider the detainee's circumstances, risks, vulnerabilities and behavioural history, the risks associated with movement, and relevant Detention Health Services Provider advice. Any restraint must be necessary and proportionate to the identified risk, with less restrictive mitigations considered where appropriate.

The Department acknowledges that instances in which an ESRA requires restraints may still present wellbeing concerns for detainees and staff. The Department continues to ensure detainees have access to appropriate health and support services.

The ABF undertakes routine and local assurance of the Facilities and Detainee Services Provider's delivery, including workforce deployment, staffing levels, vacancies, rostering and capability. The Department will continue to engage with the FDSP on implementation of transport and escort requirements to ensure workforce and staffing levels are commensurate with facility needs and risks, and support safe, secure and effective service delivery.

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