



Commonwealth
National
Preventive
Mechanism

Post Visit Summary

Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre
and Broadmeadows Residential Precinct

October 2026

Table of Contents

Summary	3
Our visit	3
Methodology	3
What we found	4
Recommendations and Suggestions	5
Facility & demographics	9
Observations	11
Safety	11
Physical safety and security	11
Mechanical restraints	12
Respect	14
Communication	14
Material conditions	15
Purposeful Activity	16
Programs and activities	16
Wellbeing and Social Care	17
Visits	17
Complaints	18
Physical and Mental Health	19
People with complex needs	19
The Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism Mandate	21
Agency Response	22



Summary

Our visit

The Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) conducted an announced visit to Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre (MIDC) and Broadmeadows Residential Precinct (BRP) from Tuesday 13 April to Thursday 17 April 2026.

We focussed on key areas which we identified may pose the greatest risks for ill treatment during this visiting cycle. These areas were:

- safety and security of the facility
- facilities maintenance and impacts of procurement processes
- staffing levels across the facility
- the impact of a new security directive for transport and escort activities.

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.

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 that 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

Compared to the situation observed during the Commonwealth NPM's previous visit to MIDC, we observed a reduced level of immediate concern regarding the safety and security of the facilities and the wellbeing of people in detention and staff. MIDC and BRP were both observed to be reasonably clean, tidy and well-maintained, with no overt disrepair or damage evident.

However, we also identified deficiencies in several key areas. These included:

- limited implementation of dynamic security practices by facility staff
- inconsistent communication with people in detention
- presence of vermin (specifically rats)
- inadequate planning, resourcing and delivery of purposeful activity

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

- inconsistent approaches to facilitating flexible visiting arrangements in cases where visitors are travelling from interstate
- shortcomings in complaints handling processes
- challenges in accessing Tier 4 placements for people with complex physical and mental health needs and behavioural concerns in a timely manner (or at all).

During the visit, we also observed the implementation of a recently introduced Departmental directive governing security arrangements for external transport and escort security activities. We were particularly concerned by the effect of the directive on people detained at the BRP, who are regularly escorted to the main MIDC facility to access facilities, services and activities. The routine use of mechanical restraints during short escort movements between BRP and MIDC had resulted in some people being mechanically restrained multiple times each day, causing significant distress and discouraging access to essential services.

While noting the overall improvement in the situation at MIDC compared to the Commonwealth NPM's previous visit, I consider that action is needed in several areas to ensure that conditions and treatment remain on a positive trajectory. I also consider that urgent action is needed to address the risk of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment arising from the blanket use of restraints without adequate consideration of individual circumstances, particularly for disproportionately affected cohorts such as those detained at the BRP.

Recommendations and Suggestions

I recommend the following:



Recommendation 1

The Department should work with the detention service provider at MIDC to introduce measures to support effective dynamic security practices, including but not limited to reviewing rostering arrangements, increasing oversight and performance monitoring of staff, and providing additional training to staff as needed.



Recommendation 2

The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for security procedures at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that security measures are implemented consistently across the facility in accordance with established procedures.



Recommendation 3

As a matter of urgency, the Department should revise the transport and escort security directive issued in April 2026 to:

- ensure decisions regarding the use of mechanical restraints during transport and escort activities are based on an individualised assessment of risk, are necessary and proportionate to the circumstances, and are applied only where no less restrictive measure is available
- introduce alternative security arrangements for transport and escort activities between adjacent detention facilities (such as between MIDC and BRP), with a view to minimising and preferably avoiding the use of mechanical restraints in these circumstances wherever possible.



Recommendation 4

The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to monitor and document instances where people in detention decline to proceed with transport and escort activities due to concerns about the use of mechanical restraints, with a view to determining whether the use of restraints is presenting a barrier to accessing services, programs and activities.



Recommendation 5

The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for communication with people in

detention at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that people in detention receive clear, accurate and consistent information about their rights and responsibilities in detention.



Recommendation 6

The Department should work with facility staff to implement a comprehensive vermin management strategy to effectively control and prevent rodent infestations at MIDC. The strategy should include education and awareness initiatives for people in detention on the health and safety risks associated with feeding vermin and the importance of supporting pest control measures.



Recommendation 7

The Department should work with facility staff to:

- review and expand the programs and activities available at MIDC to ensure people in detention have access to adequate purposeful activity to occupy their time and promote their physical and mental wellbeing
- review content and materials used as part of programs and activities at MIDC to ensure that they are age-appropriate and adapted to reflect the circumstances of people in detention.



Recommendation 8

The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to introduce clear and consistent procedures for requesting alternative visiting arrangements in circumstances where visitors are travelling from interstate, including decision-making guidance to ensure that such requests are considered favourably wherever possible.



Recommendation 9

Within six months, the Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to review and strengthen policies and procedures for handling complaints, including quality assurance measures, to ensure consistency in handling and outcomes.

Iain Anderson

Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism

Facility & demographics

MIDC is a purpose-built, high-security immigration detention facility located in Broadmeadows, Victoria. The centre comprises two main precincts, commonly referred to as the North and South compounds, which contain a number of accommodation units designed to accommodate people with differing operational, welfare and security needs. At the time of the visit, the facility accommodated a diverse population of men and women with varying lengths of detention, health needs and risk profiles.

The facility also includes a dedicated Closer Support and Engagement (CSE) unit intended to accommodate people requiring increased supervision or separation due to safety, behavioural or welfare considerations. The CSE unit was unoccupied at the time of the visit.

Adjacent to the MIDC is the BRP, an Alternative Place of Detention that operates under the management of MIDC. The BRP provides a lower security, residential style environment and is generally used to accommodate women, people detained for short periods (including those awaiting removal from Australia following refusal of immigration clearance, sometimes referred to as 'airport turnarounds'), and people with heightened welfare or health care needs, including those receiving palliative or intensive medical care. The precinct comprises several residential accommodation units with shared outdoor areas and communal facilities. People detained at the BRP also access a number of services located within MIDC, including the medical clinic, gymnasiums and selected programs and activities.

Compound	Who is held there?	Number of people (at the time of the visit) ²
Avon	General population	33
Bass 1	General Population	40
Bass 2	Vulnerable	35
Glenelg	High security	18
Ford	Offline due to fire damage	0
Dargo	High Security	16
Erskine	High Security	31

² Figures provided to Weby facility staff at the time of the visit.

Shaw	Closer Support and Engagement (formerly High Care Accommodation)	0
Broadmeadows Residential Precinct	Women, Airport Turnaround, high medical needs etc	8

Observations

Safety

Physical safety and security

Compared to the situation observed during the Commonwealth NPM's previous visit to MIDC, we noted that the level of concern about safety and security at the facility appeared to have reduced. The atmospherics of the facility were calmer, and people in detention who spoke with us raised fewer concerns about immediate risks to their safety. We also noted that works were underway to strengthen security along a known vulnerable section of the perimeter fence, demonstrating a proactive approach to addressing identified infrastructure risks.

While the overall security situation appeared to have improved, we nonetheless identified shortcomings in some security practices. For example, we observed many staff remaining within secure office locations, rather than maintaining a regular and active presence within accommodation and communal areas. We were advised that this was influenced, in part, by workforce constraints and concerns for staff safety.

Regular Interaction between staff and people in detention is a fundamental component of effective dynamic security. Limited day to day engagement reduces opportunities to build professional relationships, identify and respond to emerging risks, gather operational intelligence and de-escalate tensions before they lead to more serious incidents. People in detention also told us that the limited staff presence adversely affected their sense of safety and security and contributed to a perception that support was not readily available when needed.



Recommendation 1

The Department should work with the detention service provider at MIDC to introduce measures to support effective dynamic security practices, including but not limited to reviewing rostering arrangements, increasing oversight and performance monitoring of staff, and providing additional training to staff as needed.

In addition, on several occasions during the visit, we observed minor lapses in security practices. For example, the screening procedures performed when we entered the facility were inconsistent, we were screened very thoroughly on some occasions and less thoroughly on others. On another occasion, we checked a first aid kit in a location that was accessible to people in detention and found that it contained items that could potentially be used as weapons or as instruments of self-harm – despite a label on the kit clearly stating that such items should not be kept there.

While these issues were relatively minor on their own, the number of lapses was suggestive of a pattern whereby security practices are not being adhered to consistently and safeguards are not operating effectively. When observed alongside the shortcomings in dynamic security practices outlined above, this indicates a need to review practices to ensure that the safety and security of the facility is maintained.



Recommendation 2

The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for security procedures at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that security measures are implemented consistently across the facility in accordance with established procedures.

Mechanical restraints

In April 2026, the Department issued a new directive governing security arrangement for external transport and escort activities, following an escape from another immigration detention facility. The directive introduced enhanced security measures for transport and escort activities, including more frequent use of mechanical restraints and increased staff presence. During the visit, we observed the implementation of the directive and heard concerns from people in detention regarding its practical impact.

We were particularly concerned by the impact of the directive on people detained at the BRP. Although the BRP is located approximately 200 metres from MIDC, movement between the two facilities requires exiting the BRP perimeter and is therefore treated as an external transport and escort activity. As a result, people detained at the BRP are routinely subject to mechanical restraint (which, depending on their risk rating, may include handcuffs and restraint belts) whenever they are escorted to and from the MIDC to access facilities such as the medical centre or gym. Those accessing services

at MIDC on a regular basis may therefore be mechanically restrained multiple times each day. By way of example, a person who needed to attend the MIDC medical centre every morning and evening to receive regular medication, and who accessed the gym at MIDC once per day, would be mechanically restrained on 42 separate occasions over the course of a week.

People in detention told us this practice was distressing, humiliating and disproportionate to their individual circumstances. Several questioned the necessity of restraints given their low assessed risk and their history of participating in escort activities unrestrained without incident.

We are also concerned that the routine application of mechanical restraints in these circumstances may discourage access to essential services and meaningful activities, adversely affecting health and wellbeing. We heard that some people had chosen to forego access to healthcare, recreational facilities and other services located within MIDC in order to avoid being restrained.

While recognising the Department's responsibility to maintain security during escort activities, we noted that security measures should be balanced against the rights, dignity and wellbeing of people in detention and should not unnecessarily impede access to healthcare, exercise or other essential services. We considered that the blanket use of restraints without adequate consideration of individual circumstances gives rise to risks of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.

This risk is particularly significant in the case of cohorts who are subject to mechanical restraint on a regular basis, such as those detained at the BRP. While again recognising the Department's responsibility to maintain security, we considered that the level of restraint experienced by people detained at the BRP was disproportionate to the security risks involved. Noting that regular, short trips between adjacent detention facilities carry qualitatively different security risks to sporadic transport and escort activities to external locations, we suggested that alternative security arrangements be considered for transport and escort activities between adjacent detention facilities to address disproportionate use of mechanical restraints in these circumstances.



Recommendation 3

As a matter of urgency, the Department should revise the transport and escort security directive issued in April 2026 to:

- ensure decisions regarding the use of mechanical restraints during transport and escort activities are based on an individualised assessment of risk, are necessary and proportionate to the circumstances, and are applied only where no less restrictive measure is available
- introduce alternative security arrangements for transport and escort activities between adjacent detention facilities (such as between MIDC and BRP), with a view to minimising and preferably avoiding the use of mechanical restraints in these circumstances wherever possible.



Recommendation 4

The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to monitor and document instances where people in detention decline to proceed with transport and escort activities due to concerns about the use of mechanical restraints, with a view to determining whether the use of restraints is presenting a barrier to accessing services, programs and activities.

Respect

Communication

People in detention who spoke with us reported inconsistencies in communication and the application of known detention expectations by facility staff. They reported receiving conflicting advice from staff about permitted behaviours, particularly in relation to visits and the types for personal items that could be brought into or retained within the facility. Examples included inconsistent information regarding physical contact during visits and the types of toiletries and other personal effects permitted in detention.

While these issues appear minor individually, inconsistent communication and decision making can undermine confidence in the fairness and transparency of detention management. People in detention told us that these inconsistencies made it difficult to understand what standards of behaviour were expected of them and contributed to a perception that decisions were being made arbitrarily rather than in accordance with clear policy or established procedures. Consistent communication and the uniform application of operational policies are important safeguards that promote procedural fairness, respect and trust within the detention environment.



Recommendation 5

The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for communication with people in detention at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that people in detention receive clear, accurate and consistent information about their rights and responsibilities in detention.

Material conditions

We observed that MIDC and BRP were both reasonably clean, tidy and well-maintained, with no overt disrepair or damage evident. As during the Commonwealth NPM's recent visit to the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre, staff noted the challenges arising from recent changes to procurement processes (under which the threshold for items requiring central approval had been lowered) in terms of ensuring that routine maintenance can be progressed in a timely manner. However, we observed that at MIDC, facilities maintenance staff appeared to be managing this challenge effectively and did not observe evidence to suggest that conditions of detention were being significantly impacted by delays in maintenance.

However, we did observe the presence of vermin (specifically rats) at numerous points throughout the visit, moving freely across the MIDC site. We heard from staff that attempts had been made to control vermin in the facility, but challenges had arisen due to the scale of the infestation, the control measures available and people in detention actively feeding the rats.

While acknowledging these challenges, we were concerned that the presence and prevalence of vermin could have serious impacts on the health of people and staff in

detention facilities, as well as causing damage that can ultimately impact safety and conditions of detention (at the time of the visit, for example, we were advised that works were being planned to repair damage to electrical wiring that was thought to have been caused by rats).



Recommendation 6

The Department should work with facility staff to implement a comprehensive vermin management strategy to effectively control and prevent rodent infestations at MIDC. The strategy should include education and awareness initiatives for people in detention on the health and safety risks associated with feeding vermin and the importance of supporting pest control measures.

Purposeful Activity

Programs and activities

We identified concerns regarding the availability, quality and suitability of programs and activities for people detained at both MIDC and BRP. Compared with other large facilities within the Immigration Detention Network (IDN), the range and diversity of programs and activities available at the facility appeared to be limited.

We observed few organised sporting activities, with those that did occur appearing to be largely led by people in detention. This appears to be indicative of an interest and willingness among people in detention to participate in structured recreational activities where opportunities are available. People in detention also told us they would like greater access to cooking classes; however, we were advised by staff that these could not be offered more regularly due to limited staffing and facility availability. We also observed activity resources that appeared to be of a type more commonly used by young children, raising concerns about whether they provided meaningful engagement for adults.

We observed that people accommodated in the BRP had access to a more limited range of programs and activities than those in the main detention centre, including fewer structured activities and a reduced inventory of recreational and educational materials.

We also observed examples of program materials that were not appropriately tailored to the detention environment. For example, people in detention provided us with a copy of materials used as part of the SMART Recovery program, which listed a range of suggested wellbeing activities that were not practicable for people in detention (such as going to the beach or movies, going out for a meal, and spending time with family and friends). People in detention expressed frustration and distress at being provided with these inappropriate resources – in the words of one person who spoke with us, “It reminds us of what we can’t do.” While acknowledging that the provision of these resources had likely been an oversight, the fact that it occurred is a further indicator of shortcomings in the current approach to planning, resourcing and delivering purposeful activity at MIDC.



Recommendation 7

The Department should work with facility staff to:

- review and expand the programs and activities available at MIDC to ensure people in detention have access to adequate purposeful activity to occupy their time and promote their physical and mental wellbeing
- review content and materials used as part of programs and activities at MIDC to ensure that they are age-appropriate and adapted to reflect the circumstances of people in detention.

Wellbeing and Social Care

Visits

We heard concerns from people in detention about arrangements for personal visits in cases where visitors are travelling from interstate. We heard that the current visiting schedule – comprising one session in the morning and one in the afternoon separated by a lengthy interval – can result in fragmented visits and extended waiting periods for interstate visitors. As a result, some visitors who had travelled considerable distances were unable to maximise their limited time available with their family member or loved one.

While people in detention can request consecutive or extended visit timeslots if they have visitors travelling from interstate, we were advised by people in detention that different staff had provided conflicting information about whether this was permitted. This had led to inconsistent outcomes and a feeling among people in detention that, as conveyed by one person who spoke to us, “we have to fight for it every time”. We also heard concerns that, on occasion, visits had been cut short before the scheduled conclusion without any reason being provided to either the visitor or the person in detention, causing additional frustration and distress.

Maintaining family and community connections is an important safeguard for the wellbeing of people in detention. Visiting arrangements should, where operationally feasible, be sufficiently flexible to accommodate the needs of interstate visitors and minimise unnecessary barriers to meaningful family contact, particularly where visitors have travelled significant distances at considerable personal expense.



Recommendation 8

The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to introduce clear and consistent procedures for requesting alternative visiting arrangements in circumstances where visitors are travelling from interstate, including decision-making guidance to ensure that such requests are considered favourably wherever possible.

Complaints

We heard concerns from people in detention that complaints were at times misplaced or lost by staff and that responses to complaints were inconsistent in both quality and timeliness. These concerns reduced confidence in the effectiveness and fairness of the complaints process and discouraged some people from raising issues.

Information provided to us by staff also indicated deficiencies in complaints-handling processes, including a lack of formal quality assurance processes to monitor the handling of complaints, limited documented systems and procedures to support consistent practice, and no dedicated training for staff responsible for managing complaints.

We noted that concerns about the quality and consistency of complaints processes have also been raised during other recent monitoring visits to immigration detention

facilities. This suggests a need for a more comprehensive review of complaints handling processes across the IDN, to ensure that these processes are fit for purpose and outcomes for people in detention are consistent.



Recommendation 9

Within six months, the Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to review and strengthen policies and procedures for handling complaints, including quality assurance measures, to ensure consistency in handling and outcomes.

Physical and Mental Health

People with complex needs

As during our March 2026 visit to the Villawood Immigration Detention Centre (VIDC), we heard concerns from staff at MIDC about challenges accessing Tier 4 placements. This is a form of specialised detention for people who pose a significant risk to themselves or others, but who require specialised services or management that other entities would be better equipped to provide.

We were advised that staff are generally required to exhaust all placement options within the facility before a Tier 4 placement will be considered, even where there is clear evidence that their physical and mental health needs cannot be adequately managed in a standard detention environment. This can result in repeated relocations between compounds, disruption to continuity of care, and prolonged exposure to environments that are unsuitable for both the individual concerned and other people in detention.

We observed several people in detention with significant physical and mental health needs who required dedicated carer support. Concerns were raised by staff and people in detention regarding the quality and oversight of these services, with carers not always accompanied by centre staff and reports that the care was not consistently provided. These issues reflect the challenges of managing people with complex care needs within a detention environment that is not designed or resourced to provide specialist health or disability support.

Healthcare staff communicated to us that there had been an increase in the number of people being admitted to hospital from MIDC under state mental health legislation; however, they were typically released from hospital and returned to immigration detention within 24 hours. Staff expressed concern that people whose mental health needs reached the threshold for compulsory assessment and treatment were being rapidly returned to an environment that was not equipped to meet their complex needs.

As noted in the post-visit summary of our March 2026 visit to VIDC, the inability to secure timely alternative placements for individuals with complex needs raises a significant risk of ill-treatment, both for the individuals themselves and others in detention who may be impacted by challenging behaviour. We refer the Department to recommendations 14³ and 15⁴ in that report regarding measures to improve the efficacy of Tier 4 placements.

³ The Department should revise its policies and procedures for Tier 4 placements to ensure that facility staff are not required to exhaust all internal placement options before making a Tier 4 referral, in cases where internal placement options are clearly inappropriate.

⁴ Noting barriers to progressing external Tier 4 placements in a timely manner, within three months the Department should undertake a review to determine: – whether any existing facilities within the immigration detention network could be utilised or modified to provide appropriate accommodation for people requiring Tier 4 placements; – in conjunction with the above, whether additional contracting arrangements with external care providers may be required to ensure appropriate support for people requiring Tier 4 placements.

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.

In July 2018, the Australian Government announced the Commonwealth Ombudsman as the visiting body for Commonwealth places of detention (the Commonwealth NPM). At present, the Commonwealth NPM visits places of detention operated by:

- the Department of Home Affairs
- the Australian Federal Police
- the Australian Defence Force



OFFICIAL

Our Ref: EC26-005158
Your Ref: A2609354

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 *Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre (MIDC) and Broadmeadows Residential Precinct (BRP) Post Visit Summary*, reporting on the Commonwealth National Preventive Mechanism's April 2026 visit. The Department values the role of the Commonwealth Ombudsman in supporting transparency and continuous improvement across Australia's Immigration Detention Network (IDN).

The Department has carefully considered the observations and recommendations contained in the Post Visit Summary. We acknowledge the importance of regularly reviewing detention policies, procedures and operational practices to ensure they support the safety, security and wellbeing of people in immigration detention.

The Department agrees with seven recommendations (Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 9) and partially agrees with two recommendations (Recommendations 3 and 8). I understand officials from my Department have discussed the partially agreed recommendations with your staff.

The Department remains committed to delivering detention services that are safe, secure and sustainable and I am pleased that many of the matters identified align with work already underway across the IDN. The Department continues to aim to be responsive to the individual needs and dignity of people in immigration detention. The recommendations provide an opportunity to further strengthen operational practices across the IDN.

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

Thank you again for providing the Commonwealth NPM's observations and recommendations. 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 – Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) and Broadmeadows Residential Precinct (BRP) April 2026

Recommendation 1 – The Department should work with the detention service provider at MIDC to introduce measures to support effective dynamic security practices, including but not limited to reviewing rostering arrangements, increasing oversight and performance monitoring of staff, and providing additional training to staff as needed.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 1

The Department is working with the Facilities and Detainee Services Provider (FDSP) at the Melbourne Immigration Detention Centre (MIDC) to strengthen dynamic security practices. The Department has asked the FDSP to reinforce expectations for active engagement with detainees, increase staff visibility in accommodation and communal areas, strengthen supervisory oversight and local performance monitoring, and maintain staffing levels and workforce capability sufficient to support regular engagement, proactive supervision and facility safety and security.

The Department is increasing oversight of the FDSP's delivery of detention services through routine assurance activities and regular engagement with FDSP management. This includes monitoring workforce deployment, staffing levels, vacancies, rostering practices, workforce capability, staff presence and operational coverage, and requiring the FDSP to address identified gaps. The Department is also overseeing the FDSP's proposed team-based rostering model, subject to workforce consultation, to improve workforce stability, supervision, accountability, continuity of detainee engagement and staff presence in operational areas.

The Department has required the FDSP to review its Welfare and Engagement policies and procedures and enhance Detention Services Officer training, so staff receive clear, practical guidance on detainee engagement, communication, professional relationships, behavioural observation, conflict de-escalation and early intervention.

The Department will monitor the effectiveness of these enhancements through its contract management and assurance activities.

Recommendation 2 – The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for security procedures at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that security measures are implemented consistently across the facility in accordance with established procedures.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 2

The Department is working with the FDSP at MIDC to strengthen compliance and quality assurance for security procedures. The Department and ABF are reinforcing operational standards and procedural requirements with the FDSP and monitoring compliance through routine assurance checks, daily operational briefings, post-incident reviews, and local and national governance forums.

The Department is strengthening local performance management and assurance oversight, so compliance issues are identified, expected practices are reinforced and corrective action is taken where required. It is also reviewing the terms of reference for the local Security Review Committee to strengthen oversight of security risks, compliance issues and operational performance, including the escalation of systemic issues and emerging risks.

The FDSP's security policies and procedures are scheduled for review in Q2 2026–27. The Department will work with the FDSP through that review to ensure the requirements remain fit for purpose, clearly state operational expectations and support consistent implementation across MIDC, and will monitor effectiveness through its contract management, assurance and governance frameworks.

Recommendation 3 – As a matter of urgency, the Department should revise the transport and escort security directive issued in April 2026 to:

- * Ensure decisions regarding the use of mechanical restraints during transport and escort activities are based on an individualised assessment of risk, are necessary and proportionate to the circumstances, and are applied only where no less restrictive measure is available.
- * Introduce alternative security arrangements for transport and escort activities between adjacent detention facilities (such as between MIDC and BRP), with a view to minimising and preferably avoiding the use of mechanical restraints in these circumstances wherever possible.

The Department **partially agrees** with Recommendation 3

The Department has reviewed and clarified the April 2026 transport and escort security direction. The direction clarifies that mechanical restraints are not automatic and use must be determined on a case-by case basis.

The Department requires transport and escort decisions to be informed by a Detainee Risk Assessment and Escort Security Risk Assessment, covering the detainee's individual circumstances, identified risks, vulnerabilities and behavioural history, the risks of the movement, and relevant Detention Health Services Provider advice. These assessments require any use of mechanical restraints to be necessary and proportionate to the identified risk and require less mitigations to be considered where appropriate.

The Department has asked the FDSP to apply these requirements across the immigration detention network, including for movements between MIDC and BRP. For movements between adjacent facilities, the Department has asked the FDSP to consider alternative risk mitigations where appropriate, having regard to the individual risk assessment, safety and security requirements and detainee wellbeing.

Recommendation 4 – The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to monitor and document instances where people in detention decline to proceed with transport and escort activities due to concerns about the use of mechanical restraints, with a view to determining whether the use of restraints is presenting a barrier to accessing services, programs and activities.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 4

The Department monitors and documents when detainees decline transport and escort activities. The Department receives regular reporting on missed and refused medical appointments and, where known, why they did not proceed, including when a detainee declines because of a proposed risk mitigation measure such as mechanical restraints.

The Department reviews this information through national governance forums, including the Detention Service Provider Committee, Health and Wellbeing Services Committee and Joint Service Provider Forum, to identify emerging risks, trends and potential barriers to detainees accessing services.

The Department will continue analysing this information to determine whether restraints are creating systemic barriers to health services, programs or activities and whether additional policy, procedural or operational changes are required.

Recommendation 5 – The Department should work with facility staff to review current compliance and quality assurance processes for communication with people in detention at MIDC, with a view to ensuring that people in detention receive clear, accurate and consistent information about their rights and responsibilities in detention.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 5.

The Department will improve reception and induction information and, consistent with the recommendation, has asked the FDSP to provide clear and consistent information about detainees' rights and responsibilities.

The FDSP is required to provide this information through reception and induction, including information about rights and responsibilities, available services, complaints mechanisms and access to relevant external organisations. Information is also provided through written material, Detention Consultative Forums, engagement with the FDSP welfare team, and interactions with ABF and Departmental officers throughout a detainee's immigration pathway.

The Department will use the review to determine whether current assurance arrangements demonstrate consistent delivery and understanding in practice, and whether further measures are required. It will monitor the arrangements through its contract management, assurance and governance frameworks and require identified gaps or inconsistencies to be addressed.

Recommendation 6 – The Department should work with facility staff to implement a comprehensive vermin management strategy to effectively control and prevent rodent infestations at MIDC. The strategy should include education and awareness initiatives for people in detention on the health and safety risks associated with feeding vermin and the importance of supporting pest control measures.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 6.

In response to rodent activity at MIDC, the FDSP's facilities management subcontractor, Spotless, implemented a targeted 12-week pest management program from May to August 2026. The program used treatment and monitoring measures to reduce and prevent rodent infestations across the facility.

The FDSP engaged detainees through Detention Consultative Forums and provided information about the health and safety risks of rodent infestations, the importance of supporting pest control measures, and behaviours that attract vermin, including feeding wildlife or leaving food in accommodation or communal areas. The FDSP also directed operational staff to monitor and address behaviours contributing to infestation risks.

The Department and FDSP monitored the program through the Weekly Review Meeting and subsequent Detention Consultative Forums; stakeholders and detainees reported a significant reduction in rodent activity. The Department has asked the FDSP to maintain preventive and education measures as part of its pest management arrangements and will continue monitoring their effectiveness at MIDC.

Recommendation 7 – The Department should work with facility staff to:

- * review and expand the programs and activities available at MIDC to ensure people in detention have access to adequate purposeful activity to occupy their time and promote their physical and mental wellbeing.
- * review content and materials used as part of programs and activities at MIDC to ensure that they are age-appropriate and adapted to reflect the circumstances of people in detention.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 7.

The Department has asked the FDSP to expand the Programs and Activities available at MIDC and BRP, including new personal development, recreational and wellbeing initiatives.

The Department requires the FDSP to review programs, activities and materials under the contract, so they respond to the demographics, backgrounds, interests and needs of detainees. This includes ensuring activities are age appropriate, culturally diverse and suited to cultural, religious, educational and wellbeing needs, and provide purposeful activity supporting physical and mental wellbeing.

The Department will monitor the FDSP's delivery, consider detainee feedback and identify further opportunities to improve the range, suitability and effectiveness of programs and activities at MIDC.

Recommendation 8 – The Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to introduce clear and consistent procedures for requesting alternative visiting arrangements in circumstances where visitors are travelling from interstate, including decision-making guidance to ensure that such requests are considered favourably wherever possible.

The Department **partially agrees** with Recommendation 8.

Existing visitor management arrangements provide a nationally consistent framework for managing visits and include flexibility to accommodate exceptional circumstances, including long-distance visitors. Contractual arrangements also provide for visits outside standard visiting hours to cater for special and operational needs, subject to appropriate approval.

The Department acknowledges that existing arrangements could be strengthened by providing clearer guidance for considering requests for alternative visiting arrangements where visitors are travelling significant distances. The Department will review the relevant visitor management arrangements to support consistent consideration of these requests, while retaining appropriate regard to safety, security, good order and operational requirements.

Recommendation 9 – Within six months, the Department should work with facility staff across the Immigration Detention Network to review and strengthen policies and procedures for handling complaints, including quality assurance measures, to ensure consistency in handling and outcomes.

The Department **agrees** with Recommendation 9.

The FDSP's complaints management procedure is scheduled for review in Q2 2026–27.

As part of that review, the Department will work with the FDSP and operational stakeholders across the immigration detention network to review complaint-handling policies, procedures and quality assurance arrangements, taking account of the Commonwealth NPM's observations.

The Department will use the review to identify improvements to procedural guidance, oversight and assurance that support consistent complaint handling and identify systemic or recurring issues. It will progress identified improvements through the relevant policy, contract management and governance arrangements.

Disclaimer

This document is intended and suitable for public release and publication.

The Commonwealth owns the copyright in all material produced by the Ombudsman. With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's logo, any material protected by a trade mark, and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 licence.

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/deed.en) as is the full legal code for the CC BY 4.0 licence.

The Commonwealth's preference is that you attribute this report and any material sourced from it using the following wording:

Source: Licensed from the Commonwealth Ombudsman under a Creative Commons 4.0 licence. This report is available from the Commonwealth Ombudsman website at www.ombudsman.gov.au.

Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are set out on the It's an Honour website www.pmc.gov.au/government/its-honour

Contact us

Enquiries regarding the licence and any use of this report are welcome at:

Commonwealth Ombudsman

Level 5, 7 London Cct

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel: 1300 362 072

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.gov.au