

# Government stalls on child abuse failures

**Elise Kaine**

The government has not shown meaningful cultural and behavioural change in the wake of an inquiry into child sex abuse in state settings, according to a parliamentary report tabled this week.

The report scrutinising the Tasmanian government's response to the Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse was tabled in the House of Assembly on Tuesday, revealing concerns over stalled reforms.

The second interim report of the Joint Sessional Committee, chaired by Meg Webb MLC, acknowledged that while the



**Independent  
MLC Meg  
Webb**

government had made “significant progress” on some administrative fronts, the ultimate goal of meaningful cultural and behavioural change had not yet been demonstrated.

The committee directed its most severe criticism at the government's handling of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC), highlighting “apparent inertia” by the government in relation to clos-

ing the facility, which was a central focus of the original inquiry.

The report notes an increase in the number of detained children at AYDC – the majority of whom are unsentenced – and criticises the continued use of lockdowns and isolation and a lack of therapeutic support.

The committee urged the government to prioritise all recommendations required to expedite the centre's permanent closure.

The report also raised red flags over the allocation of public funds, with the committee condemning the government's approach of funding child safety services and diver-

sion programs through political election commitments rather than rigorous, competitive departmental tender processes.

The committee noted the “apparent lack of clarity on key matters relating to the JCP Youth's BEAST program, including its evidence base, model of care, qualifications of staff, and lack of independent evaluation”.

The committee said the \$3.7m given to JCP Youth as part of an election commitment was “inappropriate”.

A government spokeswoman said the funding commitment built on existing diversionary programs and

would help increase JCP Youth's capacity to respond to up to 54 additional young people over three years.

The committee said there had been “systemic failures in the protection of children from sexual abuse in institutional settings”.

It strongly urged the government to properly fund the out-of-home care sector and called for the minimum age of criminal responsibility to be raised to 14 years.

A government spokeswoman said it was committed to a youth justice system which achieved better outcomes for young people and kept the community safe.