

Legislative Council

Hansard

Thursday 13 August 2026

The President, Mr Farrell, took the Chair at 11 a.m., acknowledged the Traditional People and read Prayers.

[excerpt...]

Responses to Questions on Notice - Ashley Youth Detention Centre

[2.49 p.m.]

Ms PALMER (Rosevears - Minister for Children and Youth) - I took a number of questions on notice yesterday from the honourable Member for Nelson that I would now like to answer. The first question was in regard to the Auditor-General's report, so I thank the honourable member for the question. Young people in custodial settings are some of the most vulnerable in our community and our government continues to action ongoing improvements at AYDC to ensure the wellbeing and safety of young people at the centre. I note that when the Auditor-General's report on the alignment of the duration of custodial stays at Ashley Youth Detention Centre with related sentencing orders was released in 2024, which was before my time as Minister for Children and Youth, the Department for Education, Children and Young People responded, noting that it supported all five of the recommendations in full. As the department secretary, Ms Ginna Webster, noted in her response to Audit Tasmania detailed in the report published this week, the department will continue to treat unresolved matters as a priority.

I understand the department is progressing its response to the recommendation that the department should regularly monitor and publicly report on the alignment of youth detention custodial stays with sentencing orders. I'm advised the department's youth justice information technology system, which was implemented in September 2025, is configured in a way which allows the department to more accurately and securely record and monitor the alignment of individual young people's custodial stays at AYDC with sentencing orders issued by the courts. I understand that the public reporting on the alignment of AYDC custodial stays with young people's sentencing orders is currently scheduled to commence in 2027. I have asked my office to seek further information from the department on whether this could be brought forward earlier. The honourable member for Nelson also asked me a series of questions as the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence, and they were in relation to victim/survivors being consulted around gun laws. That's a very general description of what –

Ms Webb - I understand, thank you. That's fine. That's a broad topic.

Ms PALMER - Just so that we know what we're talking about. So again, I thank the member for her question and for her acknowledgement of my recent appointment to the portfolio. The government recognises that family, sexual and gender-based violence remains a significant issue in our community and is committed to ensuring that victim/survivors remain at the centre of policy development and service responses. In relation to the member's first question, I am aware of information provided by Tasmania Police during budget Estimates regarding family violence incidents involving firearms. Any incident involving the threat or use of a firearm in a family violence context is deeply concerning and highlights the serious risks faced by victim/survivors. I'm advised that of the recorded family violence incidents for 2025-26, 110 or 1.55 per cent of incidents involve the actual or threatened use of a firearm,

reflecting a reduction compared with the 2024-25 figures provided by Tasmania Police at budget Estimates.

With respect to consultation and policy development, the Tasmanian government is committed to ensuring that a broad range of perspectives inform its work to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence. The implementation of Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027: Survivors at the Centre continues, with a system-wide evaluation currently underway to help inform future strategic directions. As part of this work, the voices of victim/survivors and those with lived experience remain critically important. In relation to the next family and sexual violence action plan, work to inform future priorities will be guided by the findings of the current evaluation, evidence, stakeholder engagement and the experiences of victims/survivors. The government acknowledges the serious risks that firearms can present in family violence situations and will continue to consider all evidence-based approaches that improve safety outcomes for victim-survivors.

Responsibility for firearms legislation and any associated reform processes rests with my colleague, the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Nevertheless, I agree that the impacts of firearms in family and gender-based violence settings are an important consideration wherever policy and legislative reform intersects with community safety and the prevention of violence. Regarding the advisory arrangements referred to by the honourable member, decisions relating to consultation mechanisms for firearm policy and legislative reform are matters for the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. I'm advised that the government continues to engage with a range of stakeholders when it comes to firearm reform, including engagement with the Alannah & Madeline Foundation, Engender Equality and Medics for Gun control. I'm advised minister Ellis met directly with Engender Equality earlier this year. The government appreciates the need for high-quality advice when it comes to all elements of reform and particularly in relation to firearms. I'm also advised the government will set up a new advisory body to consider any future firearms reform. It will support implementation of reforms and help keep the balance between law abiding firearm owners and community safety.

I will continue to work collaboratively across government to ensure that the prevention of family and sexual violence remains a central consideration in relevant policy discussions. I will write to the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management to seek his consideration of how the voices of victim/survivors and those with lived experience can continue to be heard in relation to reforms.

The government remains committed to reducing family, sexual and gender-based violence, strengthening responses for victim/survivors and ensuring that policy development is informed by evidence, expertise and lived experience.

Ms WEBB - I thank the minister for coming back with such comprehensive responses to the answers to the questions I put yesterday. I really do appreciate it, and I know you're genuinely engaged in this portfolio and care a lot about delivering outcomes in it, so thank you.

The follow up question I had, I appreciate that at the end there of your answer, you pointed to writing to the minister for Police to ask about how the voice of the victim/survivors can continue to inform policy. I ask you, will you commit to asking him to put somebody or a range of voices from that cohort onto the new advisory group? Will you actually directly advocate for that, given that that's really going to be the body that's looking at implementing and advising into the future. Unless those voices are centrally there, it's very difficult for community have confidence that they're going to have a central role in informing it. Will you take it on as part of that correspondence to directly advocate for that to happen?

Ms PALMER - Yes, that will be part of what my letter will be to him around those considerations.

Ms WEBB - Thank you.