

# First Annual Report from the Australian National Preventive Mechanism calls for the treatment of people in detention to improve

Today, the Australian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) published its first Annual Report, for the period 01 July 2022 – 30 June 2023.

The report identified the following issues of concern:

- children in detention are spending too long isolated in their own cells.
- there are barriers to people with disability in detention accessing individualised supports, including those funded under the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- the lack of access to Medicare in prisons can lead to an inability to access some services and medications.
- staffing shortages have continued to have a significant negative impact across both adult and youth detention environments, and
- there are increasing numbers of people on remand in prisons and youth detention centres, but corrections centres are not necessarily equipped to afford them the treatment and conditions they are entitled to.

In the report, Dr Alice Jill Edwards, UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, stated:

*“On Australia’s journey towards preventing all forms of torture and other ill-treatment, this inaugural Annual Report of Australia’s National Preventive Mechanism is a pivotal step forward.”*

Under the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (OPCAT), the Australian NPM has a mandate to regularly visit places of detention and make recommendations towards preventing torture and ill treatment in detention.

The Australian NPM is made up of separate monitoring bodies across Australian jurisdictions.

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However, the Australian NPM is incomplete, with three of Australia's most populous jurisdictions yet to join.

On this, Iain Anderson, Commonwealth Ombudsman and Coordinator of the Australian NPM comments:

*“There remain significant gaps in the oversight of Australia’s places of detention.*

*Resourcing constraints and unresolved funding disputes between the Australian, state and territory governments continue to impact the full potential of the Australian NPM.*

*There is much work to do across the country to improve detention environments. OPCAT presents an enormous opportunity for Australia to improve the treatment of people held in detention.”*

The Annual Report is available via the Commonwealth Ombudsman website [here](#).

For further enquiries please contact us at [media@ombudsman.gov.au](mailto:media@ombudsman.gov.au).