

Timeline of events in the Northern Territory's juvenile detention system

Footage aired by Four Corners of the treatment of teenagers held at Darwin's Don Dale detention centre shocked Australia. It was the culmination of years of violent incidents and official reports into 'a system in daily crisis'



Don Dale youth detention centre which the former corrections commissioner said was fit only to be bulldozed.

By Helen Davidson
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This timeline consists of reports from the Vita review into the NT youth detention system, police media releases and media reports. Some incidents were highlighted by the ABC's Four Corners program on 25 July 2016 and correlated with available data. Not all incidents could be matched.

2010

March: Detainees at Alice Springs allegedly assault staff and escape.

April: Detainees at Alice Springs allegedly assault staff and escape. Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Don Dale.

September: Dylan Voller, 13, is held down by three men and stripped in his cell. An officer is charged and found not guilty.

October: Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Don Dale.

November: Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Don Dale.

December: Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Alice Springs.

2011

April: Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Alice Springs.

June: Youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee at Don Dale.

July: Detainee/s escape from Alice Springs.

September: The NT government releases a report by former Country Liberal leader Jodeen Carney into the Northern Territory youth justice system.

December: “Riotous behaviour” and attempted escape at Don Dale.

2012

April: Detainee/s escape from Alice Springs.

May: Two detainees climb on to the roof and cause property damage (location unclear).

May: Seven detainees escape from Alice Springs.

October: Detainee at Alice Springs allegedly assaults staff.

November: Youth worker alleged to have used excessive force on a detainee at Don Dale.

December: Detainee at Alice Springs allegedly assaults staff.

2013

January: Two detainees escape from Alice Springs.

June: Attempted escape from Alice Springs.

July: Two detainees climb on the roof at Don Dale.

August: Three detainees try to escape Don Dale and damage property.

September: Eight detainees are involved in a disturbance, damage property, and attempt to escape.

2014

February: A detainee attempts to escape from the youth justice court in Darwin.

March: Four detainees escape from Alice Springs.

March: Two detainees climb on to the roof of Don Dale and damage property.

April: Detainee/s attempt escape from Darwin magistrates court.

July: Three escapees from Alice Springs are apprehended.

August: Five detainees escape from Don Dale.

A youth worker allegedly assaults a detainee. According to lawyers he walked into the isolation block and threw fruit at the boy's cell. He then went inside, tried to cover the cameras and verbally assaulted the detainee.

Guards use teargas on six boys at Don Dale in response to a disturbance when one boy got out of his cell. He and five others had been held in isolation for between six and 17 days – five of them involved in the earlier escape.

Detainees are moved to a facility within the new adult prison at Holtze. Some damage property there.

September: Detainees are involved in a disturbance, damage property and attempt escape from the Holtze interim facility.

Three detainees allegedly assault staff and attempt escape from Holtze. Detainees allegedly damage property.

December: Detainees are moved to the former maximum security adult prison, just down the road from the old Don Dale. The new place is given the same name.

2015

January: Detainees allegedly set a fire and one gets on to the roof of the Don Dale facility, but the Department of Correctional Services contradicts the police report.

February: Michael Vita releases his review into the juvenile detention system and finds a "climate of daily crisis".

Three detainees allegedly steal a tradesman's vehicle at Don Dale and drive it through a fence, the ABC reports.

March: Dylan Voller, 17, is strapped to a restraint chair, with a spit hood over his face, for an hour and 50 minutes.

April: Three youths escape custody while being transported to Don Dale. One is quickly recaptured.

May: A 17-year-old reportedly flees the dock at the Darwin magistrates court.

June: Detainees at Don Dale are involved in a disturbance, trashing parts of B block. Some escape through the roof. They steal a car and spark a police chase, before driving the vehicle back through the doors of the facility and doing burnouts for 45 minutes until they are apprehended.

Prison guards are to be brought in to juvenile facilities to work alongside youth justice officers, the corrections commissioner, Ken Middlebrook, announces.

August: The new children's commissioner, Colleen Gwynne, gives the government a report initiated by her predecessor Howard Bath into the teargassing, restraints, use of solitary confinement and other incidents. When the report is made public in September, Middlebrook dismisses many of its findings, saying it had "a lot of inaccuracies".

October: Three youths allegedly assault and injure a prison guard and escape the Alice Springs holding centre.

A youth justice conference hears allegations from a former detainee that inmates were made by youth justice officers to eat bird faeces and fight each other in return for junk food. The matter is referred to police.

November: Middlebrook resigns after an adult prisoner convicted of rape and murder escapes from a work release program he should not have had permission to take part in.

2016

April: Bill introduced to territory parliament giving wider scope for use of handcuffs, cable ties, spit hoods and restraint chairs.

July: ABC airs Four Corners program revealing footage of teenage detainees being teargassed, forcibly stripped, hooded and restrained. Malcolm Turnbull announces royal commission and appoints former chief justice Brian Martin to head it. Territory suspends use of restraint chairs and spithoods pending the outcome of the commission and drops plans to counter-sue two detainees over events at Don Dale.

August: Martin resigns, citing potential perceptions of a conflict of interest and lack of confidence in him from some Indigenous representatives. The social justice commissioner, Mick Gooda, and a former Queensland supreme court justice, Margaret White, are appointed as co-commissioners in his place.