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**Australia urgently needs a national approach to stop abuse of children in youth detention, in light of new, horrific details about hog-tying and sedating children.**

The latest revelations from Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville add to the litany of abuses of children in detention around Australia, including the Northern Territory's Don Dale and Victoria's Barwon prison.

The revelations were exposed in previously redacted sections of the Independent Review of Youth Detention report, released yesterday by the Queensland Government.

"These findings paint a grim picture of the abuse that children suffer – particularly Indigenous children – in Queensland's youth detention," said Roxanne Moore, Indigenous Rights Campaigner at Amnesty International Australia.

Many of the incidents related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who are 27 times more likely to be detained than non-Indigenous children in Queensland.

## **Hog-tying violated international law**

The report cites several instances in 2013 when Cleveland staff 'hogtied' children at risk of self harm, in order to sedate them.

In the hog-tie position, staff cuffed children's hands and ankles while they lay on the floor. Their hands and feet were then linked together behind their back. Sometimes children were also put in a helmet.

"It's sickening that successive Queensland Governments allowed detention staff to hog-tie then sedate vulnerable kids. It's cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, in violation of international law," said Roxanne Moore.

"Three oversight bodies were made aware of this practice over several years, and all allowed it to continue. Queensland must make sure abuses never happen again, by immediately putting in place a completely independent Inspector of Custodial Services."

"These violations add to the mountain of evidence of abuse of children in detention around Australia. It's clear we need a Federal overhaul to protect all children in the justice system, and Prime Minister Turnbull must commit to a National Action Plan on Youth Justice," said Roxanne Moore.

## **Other concerning findings include:**

- Excessive use of force, unnecessary use of solitary confinement, and broken complaint and investigative procedures, including missing CCTV footage.
- Inappropriate use of restraints, including on an Indigenous boy who was held on the ground and handcuffed in front of Elders during NAIDOC Week celebrations.
- Staff punished children's behaviour by putting them in solitary confinement, using restraints, and depriving them of food, drink and prescribed medications.
- A boy's clothes were cut off with a knife and he was left naked in solitary confinement. The incident was found to be excessive use of force and breach the principles of the *Youth Justice Act 1992 (Qld)*.

- The “unfair, unjust and unreasonable” treatment of a 17-year-old in an adult prison, who was put in restraints and a helmet after repeatedly pressing an intercom button.

## Urgent action needed

“This Review has confirmed the urgency for all 60 of the 17-year-olds in adult prisons to be transferred out immediately – there must be bipartisan commitment so these horrors don’t happen again,” said Roxanne Moore.

In a welcome move, the Queensland Government adopted all the Review’s recommendations, including prohibiting hog-tying. Amnesty International calls for the recommendations to be urgently implemented.

“The Queensland Government must commit to giving every one of these abused children the justice they deserve. All staff responsible for these violations must be held accountable,” said Roxanne Moore.



*Amnesty International*

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