



## Appendix D: Summary of Survey Results - Staff

### Introduction

Between February and May 2011, the ACT Human Rights Commission (the Commission) distributed a 92 question survey to current and former staff of Bimberi, with some questions only being applicable to current or former staff.

The survey was designed by the Commission, in consultation with the Australian Education Union (AEU) and the Community & Public Sector Union (CPSU), and was available in either hard-copy, with results being dropped into a locked collection box located in a common administrative area of Bimberi, or via an on-line Survey Monkey link. The link to the on-line survey was distributed by the AEU and the CPSU to current and former staff who were members, and by CSD to current staff.

Participation was voluntary, and all surveys were anonymous (unless the participant chose to identify themselves).

### Survey limitations

The survey was not professionally designed, and was not intended to be academically rigorous. Rather, it was designed to be another tool the Commission could use to engage with young people to hear their views. On the most part, the Commission did not verify the accuracy of the survey responses, with results therefore needing to be treated with some caution. Just because one staff person, or a group of staff people, reported something to be the case, does not necessarily mean that it was the case.

Having said that, all survey responses appeared measured and considered, with few extreme views being expressed. While the Commission does not know the identity of any of the participants, those staff who did express an interest in completing the survey did not appear to represent any one sub-group or clique of staff.

Additionally, while the Commission has no reliable way of verifying that the on-line surveys were completed by current or former staff, or whether one person submitted multiple surveys, the Survey Monkey link could only be accessed once per URL (or computer), and the information contained in the results of the on-line surveys reflected that they were completed by a diverse range of individuals with a detailed knowledge of Bimberi.

While the Commission does not claim that all of the survey results are completely factual, they do represent the views of 18 current and former staff, and they appear believable and consistent with information provide to the Commission by a range of participants during face to face interviews and in written submissions.

### Results

The Commission received 18 completed surveys, 11 from male staff and 7 from female staff.

Respondents reported their occupational roles as being from across Bimberi, and included youth workers, team leaders and teachers.

Respondents reported that they had worked in the youth justice system for 'less than one year', to 'more than five years'.

Thirteen of all 18 respondents reported that no longer worked at Bimberi, with 4 respondents reporting that they had left in the last three months, and 9 respondents reporting that they had left more than three months ago. Five respondents reported that they were still working at Bimberi.

### Motivations

Respondents generally reported 'making a difference' or 'helping young people' as the key drivers for their decision to work at Bimberi.

Of the 5 staff that reported that were still working at Bimberi, two reported that that they were likely to stay in the foreseeable future. When asked to identify what would assist them to stay at Bimberi, one respondent reported:

*'Management need to look carefully at staff and their working conditions and try to be more supportive and helpful.'*

Ten of the 13 former staff reported 'management issues' as their motivations for leaving. Other reasons reported as being motivations for them, or others, leaving, included:

- Staff shortages;
- Racism, bullying and harassment;
- Inconsistent treatment of staff by management;
- Lack of resources or programs;
- Lack of support from management
- Unsafe environment for staff
- Feeling isolated or worried about the safety of the 'one youth worker per wing' policy;
- Long hours;
- Not being given the resources or opportunity to work effectively in their role; and
- Poor communication between staff and between staff and management.

One respondent reported:

*'The fact that the facility is EXTREMELY understaffed is dangerous, it is tiring and the burn out rate increases due to the long hours and the intensity of managing more and more youth.'*

When asked to identify ways to improve staff retention, respondents reported a range of ideas, including:

- More staff/resources;
- More education or programs for young people;
- More training for staff;
- Better career opportunities for staff;
- Better communication between staff and between management and staff. More team bonding/cohesiveness in particular;
- Return to the 8 hour shift;
- More support for staff from management, particularly debriefing; and
- Training for managers on management/supervision.

One respondent reported:

*'I think an assessment of the communication and skills gap between management and on floor staff needs to be addressed and revised to provide more fluidity between those who work in the office and those who work on the floor. A greater element of training staff is needed to improve the capacity for safety and security. More opportunity for team 'bonding' to strengthen the team spirit and support. An assessment of the facility of Bimberi to provide the risks - and to implement risk assessment training and strategy. I think the hours that staff work needs to be addressed and the lack of staff needs to be addressed.'*

### Management and supervision

Fifteen of all 18 respondents reported that they 'did not feel valued and respected by management at Bimberi' and that they did not feel that they were 'able to have a say in decisions that affect your work at Bimberi'. This was a consistent pattern across current and former staff.

Fifteen of all 18 respondents, including all five current staff respondents, reported that that there were not 'adequate opportunities for staff to raise issues of concern with Management at Bimberi'.

Thirteen of all 18 respondents, and all five of the current staff respondents, did not feel they received 'adequate support or supervision while working at Bimberi'. Fourteen respondents, and all five of the current staff respondents, reported that they received 'little supervision'.

Seven of all 18 respondents reported feeling unsafe on the floor because of understaffing or being isolated with young people. When asked what challenges or stressful issues they had faced at Bimberi, respondents reported a range of issues, including:

- Lack of support or supervision, particularly a lack of debriefing or supervision after critical incidents;
- The 12 hour shift;
- Lack of rehabilitation/programs/case management for young people;
- Unfair treatment of staff and lack of transparency in promotion; and
- Lack of training.

When asked to identify ways to deal with these challenges, respondents reported a range of ideas, including:

- More frequency of training;
- Regular meetings with supervisors for feedback;
- More staff;
- Better quality assurance;
- Better information for staff on their rights and responsibilities;
- Return to 8 hour shift; and
- More transparency in decision-making.

Fourteen of all 18 respondents reported that 'complaints from staff were not generally treated seriously by management at Bimberi'.

When asked to describe the management style at Bimberi, current staff respondents reported a range of terms, including: 'inconsistent'; 'staff left to their own devices'; and feeling 'isolated in their duties'.

When asked to describe the management style at Bimberi, former staff respondents reported a range of terms, including: 'bullying'; 'authoritarian'; 'poor'; and 'providing insufficient direction or communication'.

### Communication

Sixteen of all 18 respondents identified communication between staff and management at Bimberi as either 'bad' or 'very bad'.

Fifteen of all 18 respondents, and all 5 of the current staff respondents, reported that they did not think that 'staff across the various area of Bimberi (youth workers, health staff, education staff, etc) have adequate opportunities to meet and discuss issues of concern'.

When asked to identify ways to improve communication, respondents reported a range of ideas, including: '*creating a forum for staff and management to discuss issues and improve collaborative work*'. One respondent reported:

*'The briefings that are held in the mornings are very valuable, but the youth workers who cannot attend because they are doing observations in the units miss out on valuable information that is discussed at these meetings.'*

Eight of all 18 respondents reported that they would like teachers to participate in case management conferences, and some respondents reported that they would like all staff involved with young people, including youth workers, to participate in case conferences.

### Training

Eleven respondents reported that they did not receive 'enough training to do their job well'. When asked to identify the most important areas of training, respondents reported a range of issues, including: 'having time learning on the floor'; and 'use of force training'.

When asked to identify the most important areas of training, respondents raised a range of issues, including: 'having time learning on the floor'; and 'use of force training'.

When asked to identify areas missing from training, or where additional training would be helpful, respondents raised a range of issues, including: 'negotiation or de-escalation training'; and lack of time spent training on 'day to day' issues that were likely to arise; 'behavioural support and management'; 'mental health'; and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training'.

Most of the 12 respondents that answered the question reported that they had received training on: mandatory reporting; cultural awareness; mental health issues; alternatives to physical restraint/use of force; occupational health and safety; and fire safety. Five of these 12 respondents reported that they had received training on human rights.

Eight of all 18 respondents reported receiving 'no training' after induction, and 6 respondents reported that would like more refresher training. Some staff reported difficulties concerning the Certificate IV CIT course, with one respondent reporting:

*'We appreciate the opportunity of doing the course, but it needs pre-planning for us to be able to attend. Many people have childcare to arrange to attend the course.'*

### Staffing levels

Fifteen of all 18 respondents reported that they did not consider staffing levels in Bimberi to be 'adequate'. Seven staff identified that the current levels were 'dangerous or unsafe'. When asked to identify other issues regarding staff levels, respondents reported a range of issues, including:

- Young people missing out on education due to staff shortages;
- Insufficient staff on the floor;
- Lunchtimes cut down; and
- There should be enough staff for youth workers to work in pairs.

### Safety and security

Fourteen of all 18 respondents reported that Bimberi was a 'somewhat unsafe' or 'very unsafe' place to work. Nine respondents reported that Bimberi was 'somewhat unsafe' or 'very unsafe' for young people.

Eight of 15 respondents that answered the question reported that they thought that 'security considerations' had been used to 'unreasonably inhibit the provision of appropriate emotional support of residents'. Seven of these 15 respondents reported that they thought that 'security considerations' had been used to 'unreasonably inhibit the provision of counselling support or education delivery'.

When asked about what factors determined safety and security in the centre, respondents reported a range of issues, including:

- Shortage of staff, or experienced staff;
- Poor communication; and
- Faulty equipment, such as radios, CCTV and duress alarms.

When asked about solutions to security concerns, most respondents reported addressing staff shortages

### Policies and procedures

Nine of all 18 respondents reported that the *Human Rights Act 2004* was a 'generally negative influence' at Bimberi.

Nine of all 18 respondents reported that the behaviour management system for young people was not applied fairly, and eleven respondents reported that they did not find the system easy to understand.

### Complaints from young people

Eleven of all 18 respondents reported that 'young people are encouraged to make a complaint if they are unhappy with their treatment at Bimberi'. Six of these 11 respondents reported that they thought that complaints were 'taken seriously by staff'. Other respondents reported that they thought that young people's complaints were 'taken more seriously than staffing issues'.

Of the 13 respondents that answered the question:

- Seven reported that they thought the Human Rights Commission was effective in resolving complaints (three reported that they did not);
- Five reported that they thought the Official Visitor was effective in resolving complaints (six reported that they did not);
- Five reported that they thought the Public Advocate was effective in resolving complaints (three reported that they did not);
- Three reported that they thought the Ombudsman was effective in resolving complaints (five reported that they did not);

One respondent reported that they thought that there should be an 'independent group to work on-site to deal directly with complaints'.

### Searches and use of force

Ten of all 18 respondents reported that they thought that searching, including strip searching, was 'generally used reasonably at Bimberi'. Five respondents reported that they thought that strip searches were used 'about the right amount', and three reported that they thought that strip searches 'should be used more'.

Most respondents reported that they don't like doing strip searches, but that 'they are necessary due to the amount of contraband'.

One respondent reported:

*'People like to hide anything they can on / in their body or in / within their clothing. Searching is a MUST it is there for the workers safety as well as other residents.'*

One other respondent reported:

*'I wonder what is more important - finding a missing pen (often taken for fun by new remand students for a bit of fun and kudos in a boring place) - or the pride and dignity of vulnerable teenagers. Lets think about these incidents strategically and make balanced decisions depending on circumstance and risk - students who have been subjected to sexual assault or other violence may find a strip search incredibly demeaning and do more damage than a little graffiti - why are we here - to keep the walls pristine?'*

Seven of 13 respondents that answered the question reported that they thought that restraints (such as handcuffs) were 'used reasonably'. Six respondents reported that they thought that restraints were used 'about the right amount, and five respondents reported that they thought that restraints were 'not being used reasonably'.

One respondent reported:

*'Totally appropriate and necessary. If one detainee was to run off or climb on a roof, others may join in and we would have a total loss of control and a riot on our hands. Dangerous to detainees and staff.'*

One other respondent reported:

*'I felt saddened to see young people handcuffed, they were humiliated and vulnerable. At times I saw this happening just to transport young people across the yard - if they were putting up no resistance and they were inside why? These are kids for gods sake!!!'*

Eight of the 12 respondents that answered the question reported that they thought they had the skills and the right levels of knowledge to manage young people's behaviours.

## Segregation

Eight of all 18 respondents reported that they thought that segregation was 'not used reasonably at Bimberi', with most of these 8 respondents reporting that they thought segregation 'was not used enough'.

Eight of the 13 respondents that answered the question, reported that they thought that young people were treated 'well' or 'very well' while in segregation. Nine of the 13 respondents reported that they thought that segregation was 'beneficial for the development of young people at Bimberi'.

One respondent reported:

*'Segregation is a good tool. It enables the worker to engage with the young person away from his/her peers where they receive negative influence. The downfall is management are biased as to who they decide to segregate.'*

One other respondent reported:

*'These students need to learn how to behave within society. Pulling them out of society to the extent of segregation is not going to teach them those skills.'*

## Rehabilitation

Eight of all 18 respondents 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' that 'Bimberi is effective in helping young people improve their lives'. When asked about how to improve the rehabilitation of young people, respondents reported a range of issues, including:

- More varied education, particularly vocational education and more teachers;
- Better reintegration into community for longer term offenders;
- Greater cohesion between case management plans and education plans; and
- Intensive support and more focus on individual needs.

Seven of the 13 respondents that answered the question reported that services in Bimberi for physical and mental health and wellbeing were 'reasonably effective', and nine of these 13 respondents reported that they thought that education and training programs were 'reasonably' effective. Eight of these 13 respondents reported that they thought that living skills programs were 'not reasonably effective'; seven of these 13 respondents reported that they thought that programs to deal with difficulties and challenges were 'not reasonably effective'; and nine of these 13 respondents reported that they thought support for relationships with friends and family were 'not reasonably effective'.

Eleven of all 18 respondents reported that they thought that Bimberi was 'bad' or 'very bad' at preparing young people for their return to the community. When asked about how to improve reintegration into the community, respondents reported a range of issues, including:

- Organised visits with the family outside of the centre to integrate into the community; and
- Establish a Transition Unit.

### Equality

Eight of all 18 respondents reported that they thought that females at Bimberi receive 'better treatment' than males, and ten of all 18 respondents reported that they thought that there were problems with 'racism/racial prejudice among the young people at Bimberi'.

Respondents were equally divided on the issue of whether young people with a disability were treated equally to others at Bimberi (including providing young people with a disability with the appropriate supports to allow them to participate equally).

One respondent reported:

*'If these students were assessed using the normal education departmental guidelines they would receive support in terms of extra funding.'*

Five of the 13 respondents reported that they thought that management treated men and women staff equally, and three of these 13 respondents reported that they thought that either men or women were treated better by management.

Five of the 12 respondents that answered the question reported that they thought that staff from different cultural backgrounds 'did not receive equal treatment to other staff at Bimberi', and six of the 12 respondents that answered the question reported that they thought that there was a problem with 'racism/racial prejudice amongst staff at Bimberi'.

One respondent reported:

*'If you are white you will get picked on at some stage here at Bimberi.'*

One other respondent reported:

*'Their appears to be a subculture that does not like the Islander employees.'*

One other respondent reported:

*'I have witnessed Islander or employees of descent other than Australian being treated differently within the workplace.'*