



## Victoria's youth solitary confinement faces scrutiny in anti-torture review

NITV News - 4 Mar 2019

A view of Melbourne's Parkville Youth Justice Centre



The solitary confinement of juveniles in Victorian youths' prisons will be tested against international anti-torture guidelines in a review led by the state's Ombudsman.

A multi-agency inspection team led by Victoria's Ombudsman will look at the isolation of youths and children at Port Phillip Prison and Malmsbury Youth Justice Precinct and at secure welfare services to test the practice against international anti-torture guidelines.

The inspections will happen during March and April and will be carried out in line with the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture (OPCAT).

Port Phillip Prison is Victoria's largest maximum-security prison and has a dedicated youth unit.

**Malmsbury Youth Justice Precinct is a centre for males aged 15-20 and secure welfare services are facilities for children and young people under child protection orders who are at substantial and immediate risk of harm.**

"The inspection team will gather first-hand observations; speak confidentially with children, young people and staff; have access to inspect all areas of a facility; and review relevant records and documentation," the Ombudsman's office said in a statement.

In a national first, Ombudsman Deborah Glass has created an advisory group of leading oversight bodies and civil organisations to assist her investigation and advise on areas such as childhood trauma and mental health.

It includes people from the Human Rights Law Centre, Children and Young People Commission, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Disability Services Commissioner.

Ms Glass announced in December she would do the investigation into youth solitary confinement.

It follows a 2017 report into OPCAT inspections of the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre, which raised concerns about strip searching the women prisoners before and after contact visits and the use of restraints, including handcuffing pregnant women at external medical appointments.