

Meeting of the OPCAT Advisory Group 12 May 2023 **COMMUNIQUE No. 1, 2023**

On 12 May 2023, the Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman's (the Office) OPCAT Advisory Group (OAG) held its first meeting for 2023. The meeting was chaired by Iain Anderson, Commonwealth Ombudsman.

OAG members discussed a range of matters including:

- updates from the Commonwealth NPM, including the publication of the Annual Report for the 2021-22 financial year on 20 January 2023 (report [here](#))
- the continued work of the Australian NPM following the terminated visit of the United Nations Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) and the 20 January 2023 deadline for Australia to establish its NPM
- OAG guidance on a range of OPCAT-related matters, including the SPT's draft General Comment on Article 4 of OPCAT
- agreeing the updated Terms of Reference for OAG to reflect new membership, expanded function, and the inclusion of a conflict of interest clause
- various products being developed by the Office to support implementation of its OPCAT functions.

The OAG once again expressed ongoing concerns about the treatment and conditions of children and young people in youth detention environments in Australia, particularly the grave and troubling developments at Banksia Hill Detention Centre in Western Australia. It agreed that more needed to be done to ensure that children and young people in all detention settings are safe from torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The OAG will continue to pursue better treatment of young people in detention environments and hopes to see a shift in youth detention facilities across the country.

The OAG is also committed to assisting the members of the Australian NPM in advocating for better treatment of young people in youth detention.

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In 2020, the Commonwealth Ombudsman established the OPCAT Advisory Group (OAG) to provide expert advice and guidance to the Ombudsman about the functions and responsibilities as an NPM and as the Coordinator of the Australian NPM Network. The OAG's terms of reference are available [here](#).

More information on recent OPCAT developments in Australia can be found [here](#).