TEEN ESCAPEES GET A DOSE OF ADULT PRISON

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by Jill Poulsen

The two teenagers who escaped from Don Dale and were arrested on Tuesday after driving a stolen car back into the centre are being held in the adult prison at Holtz – locked in their cells for 23 hours per day with not so much as a book for company.

A special order to lock Josiah Binsaris and Ethan Austral up in the Darwin Correctional Centre for up top 10 days was granted by a magistrate on Tuesday.

Acting Commissioner of the department of Corrections Salli Cohen said the boys' behaviour would be closely monitored over the next few days before “reading material is introduced”. “This is a practice applied in the most serious of cases,” she said.

The pair is part of a group of six who trashed the centre at Berrimah during a rampage which included threatening staff with metal bars.

They were the only two of the group to escape the centre on Sunday night and returned in spectacular fashion on Tuesday, driving a stolen car through the entrance.

Corrections Commissioner Ken Middlebrook said the group of six had been a constant problem...

The Department of Corrections refused to rule out using private contractors to guard the six detainees during the hours of 8am to 4pm.

“Our members' initial thoughts are this Don Dale saga is created through neglect by the department where they have failed to address various issues within youth detention, one of those main issues being staff training, and now they want custodial staff to pick up the pieces,” United Voice's Erina Early said.

Community and Public Sector Union director Kay Densley said locking up young adults for 15 hours a day would just make things worse. “We need proactive measures not reactive measures,” she said.

Ms Cohen said the department was considering how the arrangement would work and was keen to engage with various unions.