

Queensland Community Safety Bill 2024

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Submitted by: Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion
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Dear Committee Secretary,

Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion (**QAI**) is an independent, community-based advocacy organisation and community legal service that provides individual and systems advocacy for people with disability. Our purpose is to advocate for the protection and advancement of the needs, rights, and lives of people with disability in Queensland. QAI's Management Committee is comprised of a majority of persons with disability, whose wisdom and lived experience guides our work and values.

QAI has been engaged in systems advocacy for over thirty years, advocating for change through campaigns directed at attitudinal, law and policy reform.

QAI also provides individual advocacy services in the areas of human rights, disability discrimination, guardianship and administration, involuntary mental health treatment, criminal justice, National Disability Insurance Scheme (**NDIS**) access and appeals, and non-legal advocacy for children with disability including in relation to education and youth justice. Our individual advocacy experience informs our understanding and prioritisation of systemic advocacy issues.

QAI is funded by the Queensland Government coordinate the Queensland Independent Disability Advocacy Network (QIDAN). QIDAN members work collaboratively to raise the profile of disability advocacy while also working towards attitudinal, policy and legislative change for people with disability in Queensland.

QAI offers a youth advocacy service called the Young Peoples Program (**YPP**), which provides disability advocacy to children with disability aged from birth to eighteen. YPP advocates support children to uphold their rights and interests and to increase control over their lives. One of the areas that YPP focuses on is youth justice, and our advocates work with children with disability who are engaged with the criminal justice system to uphold their rights and ensure their voices are heard.

Children with disability are significantly overrepresented in the criminal justice system. Though youth justice census data claims that up to 47% of children in custody have disability, in our experience the numbers are much higher. In fact, senior staff members from Queensland youth detention centres and other statutory bodies have disclosed to YPP advocates they believe almost 100% of children in custody have disability.

To reduce youth crime, we must address the causes of crime and improve the way our criminal justice system responds to children with disability. QAI is concerned that the Community Safety Bill 2024 does not address the causes of crime and early intervention needs for young people with disability. It also does not provide sufficient alternatives to the criminal justice system for young people found unfit for trial or of unsound mind.

QAI has already provided extensive submissions to the recent Youth Justice Reform Select Committee on both of these topics and refers this committee to our work in this respect.

Further, QAI supports the recommendations made by Queenslanders with Disability Network, namely:

- Greater consultation with people with disability who have been through the criminal justice system, their carers and families and disability advocacy organisations
- Reduction of the number of children in adult watch houses particularly children with cognitive and psychosocial disability
- Legislation amendment to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14
- Include people with disability in any co-design and consultation processes to design a human-rights, evidence-based approach to youth justice
- Removal of the amendment of detention as a last resort
- Appointment of Specialist Disability Liaison Officers in the QPS
- Investment in initial and ongoing disability awareness training for QPS staff that is co-designed and facilitated by people with disability
- Disability screening and identification tools co-designed by people with disability and the QPS.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Matilda Alexander.

Matilda Alexander

Chief Executive Officer

Queensland Advocacy for Inclusion