

Community Support and Services Committee

From: Maureen Reid [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 29 November 2021 2:57 PM
To: Community Support and Services Committee
Subject: Age of Criminal Responsibility

I wish to express my intense support for the measures to raise the age of criminal responsibility from ten years to fourteen years.

We know that this is the right thing to do, even though there are supporters of the current system. Criminology and medical experts have repeatedly advised that young minds are not capable of making mature decisions. Many reports, such as that of the Australian Human Rights Commission of 2016, have stated that the younger children are when they enter the youth justice system the more likely they are to reoffend. These children mostly are from severely disadvantaged backgrounds (eg the large number of aboriginal children is one of these groups). They are also more likely to become adult offenders.

These facts have been repeated by many human rights organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International which criticize Australia's present system.

In the 1980s I worked in Child Safety (then the Queensland Department of Children Services). I saw and was part of groups who worked at diverting children from criminal activities to alternatives that helped them learn and become interested and involved in productive experiences. These often gave them chances to avoid their previous involvement in harmful and often unlawful activities. This was not an easy process as support workers then were predominantly volunteers. This would now be able to be financed by Government programmes which would be immensely more cost effective than the present detention system. By employing and training suitable people this would be a logical and humane way of changing the youth justice system. There are examples of some such groups operating in Australia but many more are needed.

For those people who oppose changing this age of criminal responsibility it needs to be emphasized that the current system is not working, but causing further problems for the future.

I sincerely want our country to support humane and "common sense" policies for the future, especially for children.

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