

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL 2023

Submission No: 18
Submitted by: Scouts
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Attachments:

Submitter Comments:



Background

Scouts Queensland is the largest non-formal education provider to young people in Queensland with a membership of 13,000 comprised of 10,000 youth members aged 5- 25 and 3000 adult volunteer members.

Scouting is represented in 220 communities across Queensland and delivers a program focussed on young people that is Adventurous, Fun, Challenging and Inclusive.

Scouting delivers to our community resilient young people who have gained experience in leadership, are physically active, and care for others.

Research into Scouting published by Resilient Youth Australia identifies supports that being a Scout makes a young person more resilient within our community today.

Our submission

Scouts Queensland is a child safe organisation with zero-tolerance for any harm, abuse or neglect. We believe strongly in the rights of a child as expressed in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the Human Rights Act 2019.

We also believe strongly in safe and resilient communities. Our purpose as an organisation seeks to develop young people to become responsible citizens as members of their local, national and international communities.

When ratifying the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in 1990, the Australian Government noted that the ability to comply with Article 37 in relation to separating children from adults in prison would occur to the extent it was feasible having regard to geography and demography in Australia. Scouts Queensland would encourage that every effort continue to be made to separate children from adults in prison.

Scouts Queensland believes the program we offer to young people assists in reducing the number of children in the community who enter the youth justice system. The research conducted by Resilient Youth Australia found that Scouts are 15.4% more likely than non-Scouts to feel they make a positive contribution to their community.

We acknowledge the difficulties in balancing the liberty of children against the safety of the community in which they live and that this Bill creates an incompatibility with section 26(2) of the Human Rights Act 2019.

We would prefer that young people in Queensland not have their liberty curtailed and that greater focus on non-formal education is an underutilised preventative measure by which this can be achieved.

We note that section 36 of the Human Rights Act 2019 provides that

- (1) *Every child has the right to have access to primary and secondary education appropriate to the child's needs.*
- (2) *Every person has the right to have access, based on the person's abilities, to further vocational education and training that is equally accessible to all.*

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Scouts Queensland believes that we can provide a greater focus on these rights, through our non-formal education offering, reducing the number of young people impacted by the legislative changes in the Bill.

Scouts Queensland has a 115-year history of providing personal development opportunities for young people which Resilient Youth Australia research shows them reporting to have a healthier mental state than non-Scouts by 13%.

We call on the Queensland Government to support Scouts Queensland in the development and delivery of a 10-week concentrated Scouting program for young people aged 8 – 14 years across 2 locations in Queensland to increase the positive contribution young people make to their community and improve their mental health. We would seek to work with Queensland Police Service and Government to identify locations where this trial program is likely to have the greatest impact on young people and their communities.

Our program offering provides an opportunity for young people to have the skills they gain recognised with Vocational Education and Training qualifications issued by the Scouts Australia Institute of Training (RTO 5443). Support from the Queensland Government in the provision of this opportunity would be a demonstration of increasing equitable access to further vocational education as described in section 36(2) of the Human Rights Act 2019.

I welcome the opportunity to work with Government on development of this program offering to reduce the number of young people impacted by the changes proposed through the Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023.

GEOFF DOO
CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF QUEENSLAND

<https://scoutsgld.sharepoint.com/sites/ccoffice/Shared Documents/General/Correspondence/Letters/2023/20230223 Strengthening Community Safety Bill 2023>
- Submission by Scouts Qld.docx



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