

Expanding Adult Time, Adult Crime and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026

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Kurbingui

Submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee Queensland Parliament

Inquiry into the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026

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About Kurbingui Youth and Family Development

Kurbingui Youth and Family Development is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation based in Brisbane that works alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families and communities.

Kurbingui delivers a range of culturally informed programs that support young people experiencing social, economic and justice system challenges. These programs focus on strengthening cultural identity, supporting engagement in education and employment, and improving the wellbeing of young people and their families.

Through its work across community, Kurbingui engages directly with young people who are at risk of entering, or who are already involved in, the youth justice system. This work provides the organisation with valuable insight into the underlying social factors that contribute to youth offending, including poverty, housing instability, trauma, school disengagement and limited access to culturally appropriate services.

As a community-controlled organisation, Kurbingui is committed to delivering responses that are culturally informed, community-led and focused on prevention and early intervention.

This submission reflects Kurbingui's experience working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families, as well as broader discussions with community organisations and sector representatives regarding the proposed legislative amendments.

Introduction

Kurbingui Youth and Family Development welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee regarding the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026.

Kurbingui recognises that community safety is critically important. However, our organisation also notes that sustainable improvements in community safety are most effectively achieved through prevention, early intervention and culturally informed responses.

Through our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and families, Kurbingui observes the complex social factors that contribute to youth offending. These factors often include poverty, housing instability, trauma, school disengagement and limited access to culturally appropriate support services.

This submission therefore provides a solutions-focused perspective grounded in community experience, while also identifying policy considerations arising from the proposed expansion of the "Adult Crime, Adult Time" framework.

These perspectives are consistent with commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly the Priority Reform areas that support shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and strengthen the role of community-controlled organisations in the design and delivery of services.

Drawing on our experience working with young people and families in the community, this submission outlines key concerns and proposes constructive, prevention-focused responses.

This submission reflects concerns shared by organisations working with young people and families across the sector.

Key Points

This submission highlights the importance of prevention-focused and community-led responses that support positive outcomes for young people, families and communities.

Key points include:

- Supporting young people through early intervention, education engagement and prevention strengthens long-term community safety.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations play an important role in designing and delivering culturally informed responses.
- Community-led initiatives that strengthen culture, connection and opportunity can help address the factors that contribute to youth offending.
- Policies that invest in family support, education and community-based programs can support better outcomes for young people and communities.

Context of the Proposed Legislative Amendments

The Queensland Government has proposed expanding the “Adult Crime, Adult Time” framework to include a broader range of offences.

Under this approach, young people convicted of certain offences may be subject to adult sentencing principles.

While the intention of these amendments is to strengthen community safety, several policy considerations arise in relation to the operation of the youth justice system.

Youth justice frameworks are based on the understanding that young people are still developing, and that rehabilitation and diversion are central to reducing reoffending.

Expanding pathways into adult sentencing may shift policy settings towards more punitive responses that do not address the underlying drivers of youth offending.

Several sector organisations have raised similar concerns in submissions to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee regarding proposed “Adult Crime, Adult Time”

legislative amendments, including PeakCare Queensland, the Queensland Council of Social Service and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Queensland). These organisations have emphasised the importance of maintaining a youth justice framework that prioritises prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation while addressing the underlying drivers of youth offending.

Sector organisations working in health and justice policy, including the Queensland Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies, have also emphasised the importance of prevention-focused responses to youth justice issues.

Kurbingui acknowledges the concerns held by many community members regarding serious youth offending and the importance of maintaining community safety. However, evidence from youth justice policy and research indicates that sustainable improvements in community safety are most effectively achieved through prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation rather than punitive responses alone.

In this context, the Committee may wish to consider whether expanding the “Adult Crime, Adult Time” offence schedule will address the underlying causes of youth offending or whether greater investment in community-led prevention initiatives may deliver stronger long-term outcomes for both young people and the broader community.

Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people remain significantly over-represented within Queensland’s youth justice system.

Legislative reforms that expand pathways into detention must therefore be considered in light of the commitments made by governments under Closing the Gap Target 11, which aims to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031.

Expanding the offence schedule under the “Adult Crime, Adult Time” framework has the potential to increase the number of young people entering detention. As such, the Committee may wish to consider whether the proposed amendments are consistent with Queensland’s commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly in relation to achieving Target 11.

Through its work with young people and families, Kurbingui observes that the drivers of youth offending often include:

- poverty and economic disadvantage
- housing instability
- trauma and family stress
- school disengagement
- limited access to culturally appropriate services

Evidence indicates that punitive responses alone do not address these underlying issues.

Community-controlled organisations play a vital role in delivering culturally informed programs that strengthen identity, family support and positive pathways for young people.

Policy approaches that prioritise prevention and community-led responses are therefore more likely to support improved youth justice outcomes.

Human Rights Considerations

The proposed amendments should also be considered in light of the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld).

Section 28 of the Act recognises the distinct cultural rights of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including rights relating to culture, language, kinship ties and their connection to land and waters. Under section 13 of the Act, human rights may be subject only to reasonable limits that are demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.

Policies that increase the likelihood of detention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people may have implications for these cultural rights by disrupting family, community and cultural connections that support cultural identity and wellbeing.

In considering the proposed amendments, the Committee may wish to consider whether the legislative changes are proportionate and consistent with the framework established by the Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld).

Evidence from Youth Justice Oversight

Reports from the Queensland Ombudsman provide important insights into the operation of youth detention facilities.

Detention inspection reports highlight ongoing challenges within detention environments, including the need for improved support services for young people and effective rehabilitation and reintegration planning.

Policy responses that increase the number of young people entering detention may place additional pressure on facilities that are already experiencing operational challenges.

Evidence indicates that strengthening prevention and diversion approaches is more likely to support sustainable improvements in youth justice outcomes.

It is also important to recognise the operational pressures currently experienced by frontline services, including the Queensland Police Service. Public reporting and workforce data indicate ongoing recruitment and attrition challenges within the service in recent years.

Increasing enforcement-based responses may place additional demands on police resources, highlighting the importance of complementary strategies that strengthen prevention, early intervention and community-based supports.

Importance of Education and Early Intervention

Evidence indicates a strong relationship between school engagement and reduced involvement in the youth justice system.

The “Include Me, Don’t Exclude Me” report from the Queensland Family and Child Commission highlights how school exclusion can contribute to pathways into youth justice involvement.

Initiatives such as the A Right to Learn campaign also emphasise the importance of ensuring that young people remain connected to education and support services.

Programs that strengthen school engagement, mentoring and cultural support are critical components of effective youth justice policy.

Educational engagement is a key protective factor for young people. However, data indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students experience school disciplinary absences at disproportionately higher rates than other students in Queensland. In one year alone, almost 21,000 First Nations students were subject to disciplinary absences, representing a significant share of total exclusions across the state. Strengthening culturally informed school engagement programs and early support services can play an important role in supporting young people to remain connected to education and reducing pathways into the justice system.

Community-Led Solutions

Community-controlled organisations are uniquely positioned to deliver culturally informed programs that strengthen identity, family support and connections to culture.

Evidence indicates that effective youth justice policy should prioritise:

- early intervention initiatives addressing the drivers of youth offending
- culturally informed mentoring and youth programs
- increased investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations
- initiatives that strengthen engagement in education and training

Investment in community-led responses supports improved outcomes for young people and contributes to stronger and safer communities.

Recommendations

Kurbingui proposes the following recommendations for consideration by the Committee.

Recommendation 1

That the Committee carefully consider whether expanding the “Adult Crime, Adult Time” offence schedule is consistent with the objectives of youth justice policy and the commitments under Closing the Gap Target 11.

Recommendation 2

That the Queensland Government prioritise investment in community-controlled and culturally informed youth justice programs delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Recommendation 3

That legislative reforms be assessed for compatibility with the Human Rights Act 2019 (Queensland), particularly in relation to the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Recommendation 4

That the Queensland Government increase investment in early intervention and prevention initiatives addressing the underlying drivers of youth offending.

Recommendation 5

That the Queensland Government continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations in the design and implementation of youth justice policy.

Conclusion

Youth justice policy must balance community safety with the long-term wellbeing of young people, families and communities.

Evidence indicates that prevention, early intervention and culturally informed community responses provide the most effective pathway towards safer communities.

Kurbingui supports policy approaches that strengthen young people’s connections to culture, family, education and community.

Strengthening community-led responses will play an important role in improving youth justice outcomes and supporting safer communities across Queensland.

Sustainable improvements in youth justice outcomes require policies that prioritise First Nations-led solutions, community-controlled service delivery and early intervention approaches grounded in cultural knowledge and community experience.

Addressing youth offending requires responses that prioritise prevention, education engagement and culturally informed community-led solutions. Strengthening the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations will be critical to achieving better outcomes for young people, families and communities.

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