

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

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Submission By: Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland

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Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

Queensland Parliament
Parliament House
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Brisbane Qld 4000
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Dear Committee,

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

We welcome the opportunity to advise the committee on the *Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026* (Bill). Our submission focuses specifically on the amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* (Qld) (**YJA**) and the *Criminal Code Act 1901* (Qld) (**Code**) that relate to “aiding suicide”.

Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland (**MHLEPQ**) is funded by Queensland Health’s Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch and was established in July 2021 as the peak body for people with lived experience of mental health issues in Queensland. These are our members and now number over 600 Queenslanders. We provide advice and advocacy informed by lived experience of the Queensland mental health system.

MHLEPQ has previously written on the interaction of Youth Justice and mental health¹. Our core message in that submission remains that community safety is built through support, prevention, inclusion and rights-respecting systems that strengthen wellbeing, accountability and responsibility.

Proposed Amendments to the YJA and Code

The Bill proposes to amendment to section 175A of the YJA, which already requires certain offences committed by children to attract adult sentencing rather than youth justice principles. The amendments propose adding the offence of “aiding

¹ Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland, *Submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee Inquiry into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024* (Submission, 2024) <<https://mhlepq.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/MHLEPQ-Making-Communities-Safer-Bill-FINAL.pdf>>.

suicide” under section 311 of the Code, including where a person “counsels another to kill himself or herself and thereby induces the other person to do so”. A person found guilty of this offence is exposed to the adult sentencing framework, including penalties carrying a maximum of life imprisonment.

Our Concerns Regarding these Amendments

Bullying and vilification are issues are rightfully a concern of Parliament. However, while harmful comments encouraging suicide are behaviour that must be actively discouraged or regulated, extending adult sentencing to young people risks severe and disproportionate outcomes where impulsive or ill-judged speech leads to tragic consequences. This Bill’s proposed amendments may capture a whole range of unfortunate circumstances where a young person ill-advisedly suggests someone “kills themselves”, and for a range of diverse reasons, another person chooses to take their lives. Young people may be at increased risk of saying statements to this effect due to their developmental stages and contexts. These proposed amendments expose Queensland’s young people and their families to unnecessary trauma and disconnection, when there are far simpler solutions underway, resourced, and more effective. We are yet to see evidence that adult sentences for this offence would have a positive impact on reducing suicides in our community.

Existing Work to Prevent Suicide

The Queensland Government’s own suicide prevention policies and programs do not mention criminalising young people for aiding suicide. Queensland’s suicide prevention framework, closely developed with lived experience experts, emphasises stigma, supporting access to appropriate services and responding early to distress². Exposing children to adult criminal penalties for suicide-related conduct is difficult to reconcile with these commitments. Evidence from the Queensland Family and Child Commission highlights that justice-involved children and young people experience additional suicide risks, so increasing this contact or length of contact may increase our community’s overall suicide risk³.

² Queensland Mental Health Commission, *Every Life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019–2029 — Phase Two* (Report, July 2023).

³ Queensland Family and Child Commission, *Annual Report: Deaths of Children and Young People Queensland 2024-25* (Report, 31 October 2025).

Suicide prevention should be treated as a public health and community issue that is addressed through lived expertise, not unnecessary criminal and blunt criminal justice laws.

These amendments remain unhelpful when considering the important work already underway to address bullying. MHLEPQ acknowledges the significant work undertaken by the Queensland Government since 2024 to address school bullying through prevention-focused, wellbeing-led initiatives in schools⁴. This occurs alongside recent restrictions on young people's access to social media platforms that may prevent the instances where this law would have interceded⁵. Extending adult criminal penalties to children for suicide-related conduct risks undermining and confusing this approach by interceding in approaches where early intervention, support and culture change has been funded. The amendments from parents grieving suicide have often focused on regulating social media companies rather than criminalising other children⁶. Addressing vilification laws⁷ would provide another layer of protection for young people with mental health issues; regulating conduct targeting marginalised young people through civil rather than criminal law. We remain hopeful and committed to contributing to the Queensland Government's consultations on this⁸.

Laws Unnecessarily Impact the Human Rights of Young People and Families

Measures to impose adult sentences on children and young people unjustifiably limit human rights under the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld). Human rights aim at putting the people affected – young people who may be at risk of suicide and young people who may be ill-advisedly engaging in bullying – at the centre of our decision-making. Importantly, any measures that propose to limit human rights – including the right to protection of family and children (section 26) – should have

⁴ Queensland Department of Education, *Bullying Prevention and Support* (Web Page, 22 January 2026) <https://education.qld.gov.au/students/bullying-prevention-and-support>; Queensland Government, *Queensland Unveils Anti-Bullying Plan for Schools* (Media Release, 22 April 2025) <<https://www.insidestategovernment.com.au/queensland-unveils-anti-bullying-plan-for-schools/>>.

⁵ 'Premier Says Social Media Driving Youth Suicides as Qld Backs Ban' <<https://www.smh.com.au/national/queensland/premier-says-social-media-driving-youth-suicides-as-qld-backs-ban-20241108-p5kp66.html>>.

⁶ 'Ella Had Her Whole Life Ahead of Her. Then the Schoolgirl Started Getting Messages Online.', *Mamamia* <<https://www.mamamia.com.au/ella-crawford-online-bullying/>>.

⁷ *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991* (Qld).

⁸ 'MEDIA STATEMENT: Crisafulli Government to Consult on Anti-Discrimination Laws', *Ministerial Media Statements* <<https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/102168>> ('MEDIA STATEMENT').

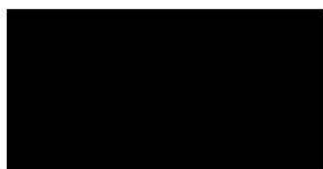
a rational connection between the proposed limitation and the purpose. In this case there is limited evidence to support that this amendment would support this purpose and may in fact increase suicide risk for people subjected to extended sentences.

Prioritise Existing Supports, Investment and Lived Experience Advice

We share the Queensland Parliament's concern about youth suicide. The most effective way to address this is to remove unhelpful amendments, while expanding current effective strategies and introducing new civil layers of protection. The Queensland Parliament should remove proposed changes to the YJA and Code that enable adult sentencing for children and young people who are found guilty of aiding suicide. Sentences of life imprisonment would only create secondary victims in instances where a suicide occurred. Enhancing current amendment and introducing vilification protections, alongside investments in suicide prevention that are lived experience-governed or co-governed, represent more effective measures to address youth suicide.

We welcome any opportunity to provide further advise on these matters and are contactable via office@mhlepq.org.au and 1800 271 044.

Sincerely,



Simon Katterl

Chief Executive Officer

Mental Health Lived Experience Peak Queensland