

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

**Submission No:** 140

**Submission By:** Q Shelter

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Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

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

**Overview**

Q Shelter urges reconsideration of these laws because of their potential and disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged and vulnerable people while the housing crisis continues and sustainable housing solutions are unavailable for people with complex and enduring needs.

We make a number of recommendations but first and foremost encourage a summit to immediately discuss a system-wide response offering a support and housing guarantee, building on the substantial work already underway to integrated service delivery to people in public space.

We are concerned that these laws will be costly to implement and that the investment by the State and other key sectors could have greater impact if we consider how to improve the early successes of integrated outreach with accommodation options, support guarantees and permanent housing solutions.

**Introduction**

Q Shelter is Queensland's peak body working to address unmet housing needs and homelessness. We envision a future in which every Queenslanders has a home. Incorporated in 1993, Q Shelter is a membership-based organisation that works to strengthen system capacity and influence policy and investment to support effective and sustainable solutions. We engage across all levels of government and work collaboratively with the public and private sectors, the community services sector, and the wider community to support solutions that are practical, evidence-informed, and capable of successful implementation.

Our membership includes Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS), Community Housing Providers (CHPs), the broader human services sector, academic institutions, other peak organisations, people with lived experience of homelessness, and private sector stakeholders. Q Shelter maintains ongoing engagement with the sector and community to inform our policy positions. Our approach to policy development draws on both evidence and stakeholder engagement, ensuring our work reflects lived experience, service delivery insights, and system-level understanding.

We acknowledge the intent of the Bill to improve community safety and address community concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour. We also recognise the importance of supporting victims of crime and ensuring that public spaces are safe and inclusive for all Queenslanders.

This submission builds on [Q Shelter's previous submission](#) to the Making Queensland Safer Bill (2024) and reflects our ongoing focus on prevention, early intervention, and system-level responses to complex social issues.

From a housing and homelessness perspective, we are concerned that some elements of the Bill may have unintended consequences, particularly for people experiencing homelessness and First Nations people. These risks arise not from legislative intent, but from how expanded enforcement mechanisms may interact with structural disadvantage.

**Context: Housing, disadvantage and public space**

People experiencing homelessness often rely on public spaces due to a lack of access to safe and affordable housing. Their presence in public places is typically driven by necessity rather than choice.

As outlined in our previous submission, there is a strong relationship between exposure to adverse life events, system involvement, and later life homelessness. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are strongly associated with poorer life outcomes, including higher engagement with justice systems and increased risk of homelessness ([Lui et al., 2021](#); [Nelson, 2020](#)).

Neuroscience and longitudinal research show that early exposure to trauma can result in lasting cognitive, behavioural and health impacts, influencing engagement with education, employment, and community life ([Heckman](#)).

Responses that focus primarily on enforcement, without addressing underlying drivers such as housing instability, trauma, and access to support, risk entrenching disadvantage over time ([Homelessness NSW & Public Interest Advocacy Centre](#)).

We consider it important that legislative and policy responses recognise these structural factors and support pathways out of disadvantage, rather than unintentionally reinforcing cycles of contact with enforcement systems.

Q Shelter's most recent pre-budget submission outlines data showing that:

- Demand for homelessness services has increased
- Rental affordability and availability have decreased
- The complexity of needs is considerable with intersections between mental health, alcohol and other drugs, disability, poverty and domestic and family violence causing enduring exclusion from access to services and housing.

### **Key considerations: Potential unintended consequences**

While the Bill is framed around community safety and accountability, there are several areas where implementation may create disproportionate impacts.

- Expanded policing powers in public space: New powers in designated precincts, including directions, banning notices, and requirements to provide personal details, may disproportionately affect people experiencing homelessness who rely on public space due to a lack of access to housing. Evidence indicates that discretionary public space powers are frequently applied to vulnerable groups, including people experiencing homelessness. These powers may result in exclusion from areas where essential services, community connections, and support are located
- Escalation from presence to exclusion: The Bill enables a pathway in which a person's presence in public space may lead to a direction to move on, followed by the potential for banning notices restricting return to an area. For people experiencing homelessness, whose presence in these spaces is often unavoidable, this creates a risk of repeated displacement. Evidence shows that such enforcement approaches often result in displacement rather than resolution ([LawRight report](#)). When people experiencing homelessness move or are forced to move, it can also be harder for services to find them to assist with support, treatment and housing pathways
- Safeguards for access to essential services: The Bill recognises that individuals may need to access essential services. While provisions allowing entry for "necessary tasks" are important, they operate as a defence after enforcement action has occurred. Evidence suggests enforcement approaches can still create barriers to accessing services ([Homelessness NSW & Public Interest Advocacy Centre](#))

- Shift from diversion to infringement-based responses: The transition from diversion-based approaches to more enforcement-oriented responses for minor offences assumes a level of capacity to comply, including having a stable address, the ability to pay fines, and the ability to engage with administrative processes. For people experiencing homelessness or housing instability, these conditions often do not hold, creating a risk of escalation through non-compliance rather than improved access to support
- Fine enforcement and escalation pathways: Infringement systems are structurally regressive and may disproportionately impact people experiencing financial hardship. For those without the capacity to pay, fines may escalate through enforcement processes, increasing contact with the justice system due to the inability to comply rather than the original conduct
- Criminalisation of presence rather than harm: Provisions that enable enforcement based on presence or perceived behaviour may disproportionately affect people experiencing homelessness, whose presence in public space is often driven by necessity. This raises concerns about regulatory responses addressing visible disadvantage rather than harmful conduct
- Compounding and cumulative impacts: Banning notices, breach offences, and fines may interact to create cycles of enforcement. These cumulative effects can increase contact with the justice system without addressing underlying housing or support needs, potentially contributing to ongoing disadvantage
- Community services and community legal services will be further taxed through higher demand from clients needing assistance to address legal and other issues that emerge from the application of these laws. In particular, the accumulation of debts from fines already serves as a barrier to housing solutions.

### **Strengthening the evidence base: prevention and early intervention**

Evidence demonstrates that children exposed to trauma are more likely to experience homelessness and justice system involvement later in life ([Koh & Montgomery, 2021](#)).

High-quality early intervention programs such as the Nurse-Family Partnership and the Abecedarian Project demonstrate improved long-term outcomes and strong return on investment ([Nurse-Family Partnership](#); [Abecedarian Project](#)). This reinforces the importance of prevention and integrated system responses. The intersection with the current Child Safety Inquiry is critical in defining measures to prevent complex homelessness and intoxication later in life. This must ensure access to early screening and assessment (from pregnancy and birth), intensive in-home visiting support, a food security guarantee, guaranteed support to access education and child care, and reduced exposure to violence.

### **Gaps in the Explanatory Notes**

The Explanatory Notes provide an overview of the Bill's intent and high-level human rights considerations. However, they do not appear to include:

- a homelessness-specific impact assessment
- a detailed First Nations-specific analysis of likely impacts
- substantive consideration of how enforcement powers may be applied in practice, including the risk of disproportionate impacts on vulnerable cohorts.

In the absence of this analysis, there is limited visibility of how the proposed measures may interact with structural disadvantage, including housing instability, poverty, and over-representation of First Nations people in justice systems. This may create an implementation gap, where the real-world impacts of the legislation are not fully understood or anticipated.

Strengthening the evidence base in this area, including through impact assessment and ongoing monitoring, may assist in identifying unintended consequences early and supporting more equitable and effective policy responses over time.

### **Implementation considerations**

Q Shelter suggests that careful attention be given to how the Bill is implemented in practice, including opportunities to support equitable outcomes and mitigate unintended impacts.

Areas that may warrant particular attention include:

- Monitoring enforcement and displacement patterns, including how often move-on directions and banning notices are used, and whether they result in repeated displacement from public spaces without connection to support or housing pathways
- Use of discretion, including how frontline officers apply powers in practice and the balance between enforcement and diversion, particularly in situations involving vulnerability
- Data collection and transparency, including the systematic collection of data on housing status, First Nations status, and repeat interactions, to enable identification of disproportionate impacts and inform policy refinement
- Accessible diversion pathways, ensuring that diversion options are practical, culturally appropriate, and accessible to people without a fixed address or stable means of engagement
- Barriers to compliance, including lack of identification, unstable contact details, financial hardship, and challenges navigating administrative processes
- Fine enforcement and escalation impacts, including how infringement notices progress through enforcement systems and whether escalation pathways are contributing to increased justice system contact
- Operation of safeguards, particularly provisions relating to access to essential services, and whether these are consistently applied in practice
- System coordination, including alignment between housing, health, justice, and community services to ensure that enforcement responses are complemented by pathways to support and stability
- The costs of these interventions could be deployed to additional skilled outreach with associated support and housing guarantees.

These considerations may assist in identifying emerging impacts early and supporting more effective, proportionate, and equitable responses over time.

### **System-level perspective: Prevention and integration**

Consistent with Q Shelter's previous submissions, improving community safety requires a strong focus on prevention and early intervention.

We consider that effective and sustainable responses are supported by:

- Early identification of vulnerability, including recognising families and individuals at risk of exposure to adverse life events and providing timely support
- Access to stable and appropriate housing, as a foundational component of wellbeing, safety, and participation in community life
- Integrated system responses, bringing together housing, health, mental health, justice, and community services to provide coordinated and person-centred support.

Evidence consistently demonstrates that investment in prevention and early intervention delivers stronger long-term outcomes, both for individuals and for communities. By addressing the underlying

drivers of disadvantage, these approaches can reduce contact with enforcement systems and contribute to improved community safety over time.

## Recommendations

To support effective implementation and minimise unintended impacts, Q Shelter recommends:

1. **A reconsideration of passing these laws** in favour of designing system level responses to increase the effectiveness of outreach, support and housing solutions
2. **An urgent summit** involving key community services and government agencies to build on and further design integrated responses to ensure that people are offered housing and support pathways and to design system responses that do not further criminalise people experiencing homelessness and people with complex needs driven by disability, exposure to adverse experiences, mental health, domestic and family violence, trauma and substance use
3. **Ensure appropriate assessment of needs** when engaging with people in public space to understand factors such as domestic and family violence, exclusion from housing options due to age and low incomes, visiting regions for hospital treatment and lack of eligibility for social housing
4. **Ensure continued access to immediate accommodation** as a basis for assisting people through support and a permanent housing pathway
5. **Accelerate efforts to identify** additional safe sleeping options and crisis accommodation in urban centres and regional towns
6. **Ensure accelerated delivery of supportive housing** and commit to a target of 5,600 supportive homes throughout key locations in Queensland
7. **Maintain and expand integrated service delivery responses outreaching to public spaces** involving local government, the Department of Health (including mental health services), Police, the Department of Housing and community services
8. **Develop a protocol for responding to the needs of young people and children in public spaces**, ensuring they are supported and provided access to a housing guarantee to improve their safety rather than being displaced
9. **Establish a monitoring and reporting framework on public space enforcement**, including use of move-on directions and banning notices, with data on housing status, age, First Nations status, and repeat interactions
10. **Review and limit escalation pathways from presence to exclusion**, to ensure enforcement responses do not result in repeated displacement without access to support or housing pathways
11. **Strengthen diversion pathways and reduce reliance on infringement-based responses**, including ensuring accessibility for people without stable housing and reducing escalation linked to non-compliance
12. **Ensure safeguards for access to essential services operate effectively in practice** through clear operational guidance, training, and collaboration with the housing and homelessness sector
13. **Invest in prevention and early intervention as a core community safety strategy**, including evidence-based programs that reduce exposure to adverse childhood experiences and improve long-term outcomes.

## Conclusion

Q Shelter acknowledges the importance of community safety and the need for effective responses to anti-social behaviour and harm. We support the shared goal that public spaces are safe, inclusive, and welcoming for all members of the community, including those who rely on these spaces due to a lack of access to safe and secure housing.

At the same time, we consider it important that policy and legislative responses recognise that homelessness is not a compliance issue, but reflects structural disadvantage and the need for prevention, early intervention, and integrated system responses.

We encourage careful consideration of how the Bill is implemented in practice, particularly regarding public space enforcement, pathways to exclusion, and the operation of safeguards. Ongoing monitoring, data collection, and coordination across systems will be important to ensure responses support equitable outcomes and do not unintentionally reinforce cycles of disadvantage.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Q Shelter's input to this submission.

#### **Further contact**

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input to the Inquiry into the *Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026*. For further questions or contact, please liaise with our Policy & Strategic Engagement Lead, Maya Glassman, at [REDACTED], in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



**Fiona Caniglia**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Q Shelter

3 December 2024

### **Submission to the Making Queensland Safer Bill**

Q Shelter is a statewide peak body working to ensure every Queenslander has a home.

We are concerned that this Bill will worsen safety in our communities as children experience the negative impacts of incarceration without adequate investment in very early preventative support.

Q Shelter is concerned that these experiences will further harm children who are already vulnerable while doing nothing to prevent violence and the associated impacts on the broader community.

We have previously written to the Queensland Government to propose significantly more investment in prevention programs that reduce the level of exposure that children and young people experience to adverse events. There is a strong correlation between early exposure to adverse events and the intersection with child protection and corrections systems. Q Shelter considers the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and later life homelessness as extremely important to understand as a basis for designing interventions that will succeed.

A truly preventative approach requires very early identification of families at risk and the availability of high-quality, intensive support to ensure that children are safe and supported.

Incarcerating children and sentencing them as adults may further traumatise young people may worsen anti-social behaviours because of the known impacts of incarceration including further offending, greater disengagement from family, school and other social connections.

Q Shelter is very concerned about the welfare of children and young people under these arrangements. We are also aware that children and young people who are exposed to adverse events early in life are more likely to be vulnerable to complex homelessness in later life. We clearly want to prevent life experiences that harm children and that lead to lives of preventable disadvantage and vulnerability requiring costly interventions that are less effective.

We acknowledge and are concerned about the experiences of people who are the victims of crime. Children involved in anti-social behaviours including violence have also often witnessed violence or experienced violence in their families or communities. The dichotomy between offenders and victims of crime does not acknowledge the likelihood that children involved in the criminal justice system are very often victims of crime themselves. Because of a lack of preventative support to engage positively, participate in education and experience a positive and nurturing environment, a greater likelihood of anti-social behaviours emerges.

We are deeply concerned about the over-representation of First Nations children in child protection and criminal justice systems. These laws may further increase incarceration rates among First Nations Children without addressing any of the root causes through genuine reforms to address systemic racism, higher rates of chronic disease, lower educational attainment levels, greater homelessness, lower homeownership rates and lower levels of economic participation.

## **Adverse childhood experiences, behavioural issues and homelessness**

Q Shelter is aware of significant research in the field of neuroscience demonstrating that children who are exposed to adverse events such as abuse, domestic and family violence, neglect, and other traumas, acquire significant vulnerabilities including cognitive impairment (Heckman 2008; Nelson et al 2020). Children who are exposed to repeated trauma, particularly early in life, have much poorer outcomes including lower participation in education and employment, higher vulnerability to substance use, poorer physical and mental health, and greater engagement with emergency and corrective services.

There is also research establishing a link between adverse childhood experiences and homelessness. One report that examined 24 studies across the United States of America, the UK and Canada showed prevalence rates of physical and sexual abuse in childhood among homeless people were many times higher than the general population (37% physical abuse and 32% sexual abuse compared to 4-16% and 5-10% respectively) (Lui et al, 2021). As housing programs funded by the State have focussed more and more on housing people with high and very high assessed needs, the provision of community housing and specialist homelessness services has been at the front line responding to the longer-term impacts of these acquired vulnerabilities.

### **Q Shelter's proposals for policy and investment**

Q Shelter is concerned about the growing number of people with high levels of vulnerability who require social housing solutions.

As such, our policy proposals since 2022 included approaches to working with families, children, and young people through intensive and preventative interventions with flow-on impacts that reduce exposure to adverse events, support high-quality primary attachments, and improve engagement with education, employment, and community life.

Our submissions have included recommendation focussed on intensive support programs for vulnerable families during pregnancy and the early years. This included an active goal for such programs to reduce children's exposure to adverse events that measurably impact their emotional, psychological, and cognitive development.

Q Shelter also provided input to the Mental Health Select Committee<sup>1</sup> which outlined:

- Models of intensive early support for children and families to prevent exposure to adverse events and increase wellbeing outcomes
- Evidence of enduring cognitive impacts from exposure to adverse events including cognitive disabilities, greater risk of social and economic exclusion, and brain changes that cause greater aggression among other impacts. The types of adverse events, the length and intensity of exposure, and the developmental stage of the child all effect the seriousness of those impacts. Exposure to adverse events impacts neurobiology including decreased brain volume.

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<sup>1</sup> See attached letter and an evidence paper led by Charles Nelson from Harvard Medical School that has informed our suggestions.

## **A policy and investment framework to improve individual and community-level outcomes**

We know the Queensland Government already invests in a range of family support programs, and support services focussed on the needs of families, children, and young people, and these are commended.

Queensland needs a policy and investment response to the prevention of children and young people emerging from exposure to adverse events into behaviours that cause harm to themselves and/or harm to the broader community.

We genuinely consider that these responses will also help to reduce the number of people with complex needs and extreme vulnerability leading to an increased risk of homelessness and probable reliance on high-subsidy housing products in later life.

There are various high-quality prevention programs that show an increased return on investment compared to later-life programs trying to address vulnerability at an older age. Our views reflect evidence from the [Nurse Partnership Program](#) and the [Abcedarian Program](#), both of which have been replicated in Australia and have been the subject of rigorous evaluation.

Q Shelter considers investment in evidence-based programs such as these important. Investment in stand-alone programs will not be enough however without an integrated way of working across Federal and State agencies, and the community services sector to improve the early identification of vulnerable families during pregnancy and very early in the life of children. This requires careful system design with clear protocols for identifying and responding to vulnerable families. A shared and agreed approach to assessment and intervention from touchpoints such as health systems, emergency services, child protection services and a wide range of community services providing individual and place-based support is needed.

There are many ways that people interact with government and non-government agencies to highlight the importance of high-quality integration across inputs such as:

- Income support
- Emergency services
- Corrective services
- General health services including GPs, hospitals and maternal health services
- Mental health services
- Child protection services
- Youth justice
- Education
- Family support services
- Specialist homelessness services and housing providers
- Community and neighbourhood centres.

Designing a system-level response inclusive of policy settings, investment in additional services, and high-quality integration of interventions across systems is vitally important if we are to identify highly

vulnerable children and prevent their exposure to adverse childhood experiences therefore reducing later life impacts for individuals and communities.

We think there is an important role for research to understand through data matching how people are engaging with various systems and how those systems respond to their needs. There is an opportunity to embed research to understand the difference that future interventions make, particularly in the context of system-level reform and integration.

#### Contact

Q Shelter can be contacted via Jackson Hills, Acting CEO by emailing [REDACTED] and on [REDACTED].

Thank you for considering our views. We know there is an opportunity to adopt leading world practices where children are protected and supported, where they are less likely to be exposed to adverse events and where they do not need to be incarcerated because of robust prevention and early intervention.



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## References

1. [Extract from Q Shelter's 2022 Policy and Investment Submission. The whole document is available at this link.](#)

## Other information

### Abcedarian Program

- [Abcedarian Program](#)
- [Sparling, J; Ramey, L and Ramey CT \(2021\) Mental Health and Social Development Effects of the Abcedarian Approach in \*International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health\* 18\(13\)](#)

### Nurse Family Partnership Program:

- [Nurse Family Partnership research trials and outcomes](#)
- [Nurse Partnership Program](#)
- [Nurse Family Partnership Program](#)

Heckman, J (2022) [Invest in Early Childhood Development: reduce deficits, strengthen the economy](#) on Heckmanequation.org accessed 30 December 2022.

[Herzog, J and Schmahl, C \(2018\) Adverse childhood experiences and the consequences of neurobiological, psychosocial, and somatic conditions across the lifespan in \*Front Psychiatry\*, Volume 9.](#)

[Koh, K and Montgomery, AE \(2021\) Adverse childhood experiences and homelessness: advances and aspirations, \*The Lancet\*, Sept 29, 2021.](#)

[Lui M, Luong L, Lachaud J, Edalati H, Reeves A and Hwang S \(2021\) Adverse childhood experiences and related outcomes among adults experiencing homelessness: a systematic review and meta-analysis in \*Lancet Public Health\* 6\(11\).](#)

[Nelson, C \(2020\) Adversity in childhood is linked to mental and physical health throughout life in \*BMJ\* 371:m3048.](#)