

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

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Submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee Inquiry into the Expanding of Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-Social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026

The **Voice for Victims Foundation** is a Queensland-based charity providing guidance, practical support, and connection to services for victims of violent crime, ensuring they are not left to navigate the aftermath alone.

The Foundation advocates for the recognition, safety, participation, and long-term support of victims of serious crime. We have made multiple submissions to Parliament on youth justice reform and sentencing policy, specifically highlighting the impact on victims and their participation in the Court process. Submissions have been made relating to the **Making Queensland Safer Act 2024** and subsequent expansions of **Adult Crime, Adult Time (ACAT)**, consistently emphasising victim impact, community safety, and system sustainability.

As we understand, the Bill proposes three principal reforms:

1. **Expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time** to include an additional 12 offences under section 175A of the *Youth Justice Act 1992*, specifically identifying serious violent and high-impact offences on victims.
2. **Repeal of the Police Drug Diversion Program** and replacement with the *Illicit Drug Enforcement and Diversion Framework (IDEDF)*, narrowing diversion opportunities and increasing police discretion to issue infringement notices.
3. **Introduction of Designated Business and Community Precincts**, expanding police powers to respond to anti-social behaviour through scanners, move-on directions, and banning notices.

Voice for Victims' submission focuses primarily on the ACAT expansion while addressing the broader implications for victims and community safety arising from the Bill.

Expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time

Voice for Victims supports the principle of accountability for serious offending, particularly where conduct causes profound harm to victims. The Bill's expansion of ACAT aligns sentencing outcomes more closely with the seriousness of harm caused and responds to strong community concern regarding repeat and violent youth offending.

However, consistent with previous submissions, our support is caveated: ACAT expansion is not a standalone reform. Its effectiveness depends on adequate system capacity, resourcing, and complementary measures for rehabilitation and victim support.

The Foundation supports the inclusion of the following offences, which are widely recognised by victims and the broader community as particularly serious:

- **s.61(1) Riot**, where grievous bodily harm is caused, explosive substances are detonated, or property is destroyed

- **s.210** Indecent treatment of a child (under 12 years or with an impairment of the mind)
- **s.216** Abuse of persons with an impairment of the mind
- **s.309** Conspiring to murder
- **s.315** Disabling in order to commit an indictable offence
- **s.315A** Choking, suffocation, or strangulation in a domestic setting
- **s.319** Endangering the safety of a person in a vehicle with intent
- **s.322** Administering poison with intent to harm, where life or grievous bodily harm is endangered
- **s.339** Assaults occasioning bodily harm with aggravating circumstances (social media publication, armed offender, or in company)
- **s.359E** Unlawful stalking, intimidation, harassment, or abuse

The expansion to include **s.311 (aiding suicide)** and **s.316 (stupefying in order to commit indictable offence)** raises important considerations for community understanding and transparency. The Statement of Compatibility does not provide sufficient explanation of the nature or scope of these offences, which may limit comprehension by a lay person.

From a victim perspective, clear and accessible communication is critical to maintain public confidence in the justice system and ensure awareness of behaviours that constitute serious criminal conduct. Plain-language explanations and consistent messaging across the community should accompany these changes.

ACAT expansion recognises offences that cause violent, coercive, and predatory harm. However, sentencing alone does not guarantee victim safety or justice. Victim confidence is shaped by whether offending stops, support is available, and the justice system functions effectively, compassionately, and equitably throughout proceedings.

System Capacity Considerations

The Bill is likely to increase:

- Contested sentencing hearings and appeals
- Reliance on expert psychological and risk assessments
- Demand on youth detention facilities
- Workload for courts, police, and corrective services

Without corresponding investment, ACAT expansion risks:

- Increasing time in custodial settings without meaningful rehabilitation
- Reducing opportunities for education and therapeutic intervention
- Contributing to higher recidivism and future victimisation

The Bill also risks prolonging exposure of victims to the criminal justice process, increasing trauma and the need for trauma-informed support, while making sentencing outcomes harder to understand. Historically, funding for victim support has not kept pace with justice reform, leaving victims to bear additional procedural and emotional burdens.

Repeal of the Police Drug Diversion Program and Introduction of IDEDF

Voice for Victims Foundation supports a justice system where actions have clear and meaningful consequences. Accountability is critical, not only to uphold community safety, but to send a strong, early

message to children and young people that drug use and associated behaviours are not without impact. Effective deterrence matters, particularly when it comes to preventing the escalation of harm that ultimately creates more victims.

However, deterrence must be practical, proportionate, and capable of changing behaviour. With respect to the proposed Illicit Drug Enforcement and Diversion Framework (IDEDF), Voice for Victims notes some reservations that narrowing access to diversion and introducing more punitive responses at an early stage may not achieve this outcome. Limiting diversion to a single opportunity and relying on penalty infringement notices risks entrenching young people in the justice system, rather than steering them away from it.

For many children and young people, low-level drug possession is not an isolated choice but is linked to broader vulnerabilities, such as trauma, family instability, substance dependency, and socio-economic disadvantage. A purely punitive response in these early stages is unlikely to deter future offending on its own. In practice, fines are often unworkable for this cohort, shifting the burden onto families and increasing the risk of further enforcement action.

From a victim-centric perspective, this is where the concern becomes most significant. If early responses do not effectively disrupt offending behaviour or seek to provide assistance for diversion, the likelihood of escalation increases; resulting in more serious offences and, ultimately, more victims. Preventing future victimisation requires early interventions that address the root causes of behaviour, not just the behaviour itself.

Voice for Victims, therefore, advocates for a balanced, practical approach that maintains accountability while strengthening early intervention. This could include:

- Maintaining access to diversion beyond a single instance where risk remains low and offending isn't escalating, ensuring repeated opportunities for behavioural correction before escalation
- Embedding mandatory, structured education and drug awareness programs as part of diversion which, reinforce clear consequences while actively educating and deterring future use
- Linking young people and their families to targeted support services at the first point of contact to assist in the addressing of underlying drivers of antisocial behaviour and offending
- Ensuring that responses are measurable, enforceable and meaningful, rather than relying on financial penalties that may be ineffective or counterproductive

This approach ensures that consequences are real and visible, while also being constructive. It reinforces to young people that their actions matter, while actively engaging them to reduce the likelihood of their actions to escalate.

Voice for Victims acknowledges the importance of strong responses to drug-related offending. However, to truly serve victims and improve community safety, those responses must not only punish but prevent.

Designated Business and Community Precincts

Voice for Victims supports the introduction of Designated Business and Community Precincts as a practical measure to strengthen community safety and reduce the risk of harm to members of the public. This is consistent with the Government's focus on community safety and aligns with recent legislative reforms, including Jack's Law, while also streamlining the Queensland Police Service's ability to effectively administer these powers across high-traffic community and business areas.

While acknowledging that the expanded police powers engage a range of human rights, the Foundation considers these limitations to be proportionate and justified where they are used to prevent violence, disrupt anti-social behaviour, and provide immediate protection to potential victims. From a victim perspective, enabling police to intervene early, through measures such as targeted scanning, move on directions, and banning notices, supports deterrence and reduces the likelihood of behaviour escalating into more serious offending, thereby preventing future victimisation. Importantly, the inclusion of safeguards and review mechanisms ensures these powers are exercised in a balanced and accountable way, while maintaining a clear focus on protecting the safety, wellbeing, and confidence of the broader community.

Voice for Victims supports the introduction of these precincts as a practical measure to strengthen community safety, consistent with the Government's focus and recent legislative reforms, including Jack's Law.

Expanded police powers, while engaging human rights, are proportionate and justified where they prevent violence, disrupt anti-social behaviour, and protect potential victims. Early interventions, including scanning, move-on directions, and banning notices, reduce the likelihood of escalation, preventing future victimisation. Safeguards and review mechanisms ensure powers are exercised responsibly.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Consistent with our earlier submissions, Voice for Victims maintains that sentencing reform alone does not reduce reoffending. Evidence indicates that effective reduction in serious youth crime requires:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Trauma-informed rehabilitation
- Coordinated responses across justice, health, education, and housing
- Robust post-release support

Voice for Victims recommend that the Committee:

1. Support ACAT expansion only with accompanying system investment, including detention capacity, rehabilitation programs, and court resourcing.
2. Require dedicated, ongoing funding for **victim support services** proportionate to increased court activity.
3. Mandate independent evaluation of ACAT expansion impacts on recidivism, detention capacity, and victim outcomes.
4. Ensure rehabilitation access for children sentenced under ACAT to reduce future victimisation.

Accountability for serious youth offending is necessary but not sufficient. Without systemic capacity, rehabilitation, and victim support, ACAT expansion risks increasing system pressure without achieving sustained reductions in crime or improved outcomes for victims.

The Foundation urges the Committee to consider the Bill within this broader, evidence-based framework when forming its recommendations.