

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

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JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE, QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT

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Submission to the Committee, March 2026



Acknowledgement of Country

Anglicare Southern Queensland acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first Australians and recognises their culture, history, diversity, and deep connection to the land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which our service was founded and on which our sites are operating today.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders both past and present, who have influenced and supported Anglicare Southern Queensland on its journey thus far. We also extend that respect to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients and partners (past, present and future) and we hope we can work together to build a service that values and respects our First Nations people.

We acknowledge the past and present injustices that First Nations people have endured and seek to understand and reconcile these histories as foundational to moving forward together in unity.

Anglicare is committed to being more culturally responsive and inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we are committed to embedding cultural capabilities across all facets of the organisation.

About Anglicare Southern Queensland

Anglicare Southern Queensland (Anglicare) has responded to the needs of our community through more than 150 years of delivering innovative, quality care services. More than 3,000 Anglicare staff and volunteers operate across southern Queensland and in Townsville. Our comprehensive, integrated range of community services includes community aged care; residential aged care; and community support programs, including youth justice, child safety, disability support, counselling and education, mental health, homelessness, and chronic conditions. Our services are designed to 'wrap around' clients in a comprehensive way, recognising their health needs but also addressing the social needs which contribute to wellness.

This submission may be quoted in public documents.

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Executive Summary

Anglicare Southern Queensland (Anglicare) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026. Our submission focuses on the Adult Crime, Adult Time component of this Amendment Bill.

We believe that the additional twelve offences in this latest Amendment Bill are unnecessary, will not improve community safety and, as in previous iterations of Adult Crime Adult Time, still remain incompatible with the human rights of children. We therefore do not support the proposed legislation.

Not only will the legislation generate harm to children, their families, and their communities, but these additional amendments will intensify the damage.

Similarly to our argument in previous submissions to Queensland Government inquiries into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 and the Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025, Anglicare does not believe that this newest Amendment Bill will achieve its objective.^{i ii}

The proposed expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time does not address the underlying drivers of youth offending. In Queensland, the Government's own reports and strategies have pointed out on multiple occasions that the children involved in the youth justice system are also the most disadvantaged, with multiple risk factors such as experiences of poverty, family violence, unstable accommodation or homelessness and contact with the child protection system that punitive responses such as Adult Crime Adult Time do little to address.ⁱⁱⁱ

Several of the additional offences proposed in this Bill are not commonly committed by children, raising questions about the extent to which their inclusion reflects actual youth offending patterns. As a result, it is difficult to demonstrate a clear link between expanding the offence list and improved community safety.

Summary of recommendations

Anglicare recommends that the Queensland Government:

- Not pass the addition of the twelve new offences to the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026
- Commit to greater transparency in publishing charge-level counts for children for all offences, to allow for informed understanding of their inclusion in any future Amendments.
- Focus on preventing the long-term offending behaviours of children and young people in Queensland by including funding for specific programs, targeted interventions, and approaches to educational inclusion that support children between 10 and 13 years of age.

Introduction

Anglicare welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026. Our submission focuses on the Adult Crime, Adult Time component of this Amendment Bill.

Principally, we believe that the changes proposed in this latest Amendment Bill are unnecessary, will not improve community safety and remain incompatible with the human rights of children. For these reasons, we do not support the proposed legislation.

Anglicare has previously provided submissions to the Committee in relation to the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024^{iv} and the subsequent Adult Crime, Adult Time Amendment Bill 2025.^v This submission builds on those earlier contributions. It considers the proposed addition of twelve further offences to the Adult Crime, Adult Time framework and whether their inclusion reflects the behaviours most commonly associated with youth justice contact. It also examines the likely implications of these changes for community safety and the need for policy responses that address the underlying drivers of youth offending.

Anglicare's position remains that policy responses aimed at reducing youth offending must be grounded in evidence, proportionate to the behaviours they seek to address, and consistent with Queensland's obligations to protect the rights and wellbeing of children.

The proposed Amendments will continue to harm children and communities

In the submissions referenced above, we outlined several concerns regarding the current policy direction, particularly the extent to which increasingly punitive responses align with the evidence on youth offending and effective youth justice policy. Our earlier submissions highlighted that:

Children who come into contact with the youth justice system have experienced significant disadvantage.

The Adult Crime, Adult Time strategy – and this Amendment Bill 2026 – delivers a punitive response to children's trauma-based behaviours. Incarceration reinforces trauma for all children, as children are removed from their carers, kin, and communities. For First Nations children, this trauma is amplified by the removal from Country and community, and disconnection from culture.^{vi} The children most at risk of offending are also those most in need, and the lines between the two are blurred at best.

Children and young people are developmentally different to adults and therefore do not have the same decision-making capacity.

The Amendment Bill 2026, like the original Adult Crime, Adult Time strategy, goes against an established and growing body of research and evidence that demonstrates the impact of child development and maturity on youth justice outcomes.^{vii} The largest proportion of children and young people represented in Queensland's youth justice system are there because they have made poor or impulsive decisions or engaged in risk taking as a result of normal childhood developmental processes.^{viii}

Children and young people do not yet have the neurological capacity to fully assess risk, predict consequences, or control their impulses.^{ix} Increasing maximum penalties for specified offences will be no deterrent at all to young people who are poor at assessing consequences because their neural pathways are still developing.^x

The Government continues to violate children’s rights in youth justice settings.

This Amendment continues to defy Queensland’s obligations under the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as Queensland’s own *Human Rights Act 2019*. The Statement of Compatibility for the current Amendment Bill, prepared by The Hon. Laura Gerber, Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, clearly acknowledges that the additional twelve offences more deeply embed the limitations on children’s rights established by the previous legislation:

The human rights below are already limited by the provisions that provide for Adult Crime, Adult Time. The limitations on these human rights are broadened and deepened by the proposed amendments because they propose to expand the scope of Adult Crime, Adult Time to a broader range of offences. The relevant human rights protected under the Human Rights Act 2019 are:

- *Right to equal protection of the law without discrimination (section 15(3))*
- *Right to equal and effective protection against discrimination (section 15(4))*
- *Right to protection from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (section 17)*
- *Right of children to protection in their best interest (section 26(2))*
- *Right to liberty and security of person (section 29(1))*
- *Right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty (section 30).^{xi}*

Sensationalist media and public commentary feed the ‘youth crime crisis’ narrative.

Media commentary about crime is often highly sensationalist insofar as ‘clickbait’ strategies by journalists and editors make violence appear to be more frequent than in reality, and the causes of crime more individualistic.^{xii} A decade of statistics demonstrates that what the media portrays as a “youth crime crisis” is far from reality. A 2024 report from the Queensland Government Statistician’s Office noted a 5.2% increase in unique child offenders, compared to a 4.1% increase in unique adult offenders – a mere 1.1% difference in overall figures. The largest volume increase was for offenders aged 40–44 years (+796) and the largest proportional increase (+14.3%) for those aged 50–54 years.^{xiii}

Negative media coverage and public commentary about youth justice in Queensland can undermine the community ties and support that act as key protective factors for children and young people in steering them away from potential offending behaviours.

These concerns remain relevant in considering the current proposed Bill. While this submission does not restate the full arguments set out in our earlier submissions, it reiterates our position that youth justice policy should be grounded in evidence about what reduces offending and improves community safety. The additional offences proposed in this Bill raise further questions about whether the expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time aligns with those principles.

The new offences do not align with the evidence about youth offending

Youth justice policy should be grounded in a clear understanding of the behaviours it is seeking to address. Effective policy responses should be developed with reference to evidence about the offences most committed by children and the underlying factors contributing to those behaviours.

Queensland publishes offence definitions and sentencing outcomes but does not publish charge-level counts for children for any of the offences proposed in the Amendment Bill 2026.^{xiv} It is therefore important to examine the reasons that underpin their inclusion and whether the proposed changes are likely to influence youth offending or improve community safety.

Whilst we acknowledge the lack of data does not prove zero incidence and it may mean that cases have been suppressed or resolved before sentence, it does call into question the validity of the additional charges proposed under the Amendment Bill 2026, given the youth-offending rationale is unclear at best. Several of the offences listed are not commonly committed by children and do not appear to reflect the offences that most frequently bring young people into contact with the youth justice system, with recent data from the Department of Youth Justice showing that 60% of offences recorded against young people aged 10-17 years were for property offences.^{xv}

As a result, it is unclear how the inclusion of these additional twelve offences fits within the policy framework as they do not appear to be influencing the behaviours that are currently contributing to youth justice contact. Data on youth offending consistently shows that a relatively small number of offence categories account for the majority of youth justice interactions. Property offences, unlawful use of a motor vehicle, and certain forms of assault are among the offences most frequently recorded in youth justice data.^{xvi} In contrast, many of the newly proposed offences are not typically identified as primary drivers of youth offending. Expanding the list of offences to include conduct that is rarely committed by children risks diverting attention from the behaviours that most commonly affect community safety.

The new offences will not increase community safety

The proposed expansion also raises questions about the extent to which the changes are likely to improve community safety in practice. Where policy measures are framed as strengthening community safety, it is reasonable to expect a clear link between the offences targeted and the behaviours occurring within the youth justice system. If the offences being added are not those commonly committed by children, it becomes difficult to demonstrate how their inclusion will meaningfully influence youth offending patterns. Given charge-level counts for children for the new offences are not currently available as baseline data, evidence of a reduction in these offences will also be impossible to verify.

This raises a broader policy question about the purpose of expanding the offence list. If the objective is, as above, to reduce youth offending and strengthen community safety, policy settings should focus on the offences that most commonly bring children into contact with the justice system and on the factors known to contribute to those behaviours. Expanding the Adult Crime, Adult Time framework to include offences that are not characteristically committed by children risks creating a policy response that is misaligned with the evidence about youth offending in Queensland.

A final note

Anglicare remains concerned that the Expanding Adult Crime, Adult Time and Taking a Strong Stance on Drugs and Anti-social Behaviour Amendment Bill 2026 will not achieve its stated objective of improving community safety. The expansion of Adult Crime, Adult Time to include additional offences that are not characteristically committed by children raises serious questions about the policy rationale and its likely effectiveness in reducing youth offending.

Evidence consistently shows that children who come into contact with the youth justice system are among the most disadvantaged in our community, often experiencing trauma, disrupted education, disability and family instability. Legislative responses that focus on harsher penalties do little to address these underlying drivers and risk further entrenching disadvantage for children, their families and their communities.

If the goal is to reduce youth offending and strengthen community safety, policy responses must be grounded in evidence about what works. This includes investment in prevention, early intervention and coordinated supports that address the factors known to contribute to youth justice contact. Greater transparency in youth justice data, including the publication of charge level counts for children across specific offences (with consideration given to anonymity and privacy where applicable), would also support more informed policy development and enable the rationale for expanding offence categories to be clearly assessed.

For these reasons, Anglicare urges the Queensland Government not to pass the proposed legislation and instead prioritise policies and investments that prevent offending, support children and young people to remain connected to family, education and community, and ultimately create safer communities for everyone.

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