

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

Submission No: 24
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Dear Premier Crisafulli and Team, I urge you to reconsider the amendments to the Youth Justice Act 1992, as I believe they may not address the root causes of youth crime and may inadvertently cause more harm than good. I ask you and your team to engage with experts in this field, not only within Australia but globally, to ensure a well-rounded understanding of the issue. It is essential that you hear the stories of the children involved in the justice system. These children often come from homes marked by domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and emotional, sexual or mental abuse. Many have received little or no unconditional love, placing them in an incredibly disadvantaged and vulnerable position in society. I ask that you understand how these adversities increase the likelihood of these children being groomed or recruited by older or adult criminals to engage in criminal activities. Furthermore, I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of detaining children in youth detention centres. Research has consistently shown that such institutionalization does not lead to positive outcomes. Instead, it often creates more dangerous and savvy criminals when these individuals re-enter society as adults. How can a child successfully reintegrate into society and contribute meaningfully after being subjected to an environment of detention, which only amplifies recidivism? The majority of children involved in the justice system come from homes where harm is prevalent—whether through neglect, abuse, or dysfunction. These children are often removed from their homes and placed in a foster care system that is itself broken and under-resourced. Tragically, some of these children are engaging in criminal behaviour as young as nine years old, with some even using illicit substances by the age of six. These children are disconnected from the education system and often grow up in environments rife with anti-social behaviour. It is crucial to recognise that the cognitive impairments caused by early adversity, coupled with substance abuse, contribute significantly to their criminal behaviour. I, like many others, want change. I want these children to overcome their adversities and grow into successful, proud members of society. I also want the community to be safe and at peace. However, to achieve both, we need to approach youth crime with compassion, empathy, and a deep understanding of complex trauma, rather than simply using punitive measures that disregard children's basic human rights. Additionally, I urge you to consider the significant financial costs of detaining children. It is my understanding that it costs upwards of \$700,000 per year to detain one child. Given the financial strain this will place on Queensland's economy, I ask that you explore evidence-based alternatives to detention, such as community-based programs that provide support and mentorship. These programs can offer the connection and sense of belonging those children need, rather than leading them further down a path of crime by affiliating them with other children in detention who have similar traumatic backgrounds. Lastly, I urge you to consider the implications of opening the children's court to the media during sentencing. This decision could lead to further harm, increasing the likelihood of sensationalised media coverage that could create unnecessary noise on social media and intensify the stigma surrounding these children. In closing, I ask you to take a step back and look at this issue through a lens of compassion and understanding. It is imperative that we address the underlying causes of youth crime in a way that offers these children hope for a brighter future, rather than condemning them to a cycle of crime and incarcerations, which is what they will only ever know as a way of life, if we choose to lock kids up longer.