

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Opposition to Elements of the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024
The proposed Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 introduces significant amendments to the Youth Justice Act 1992 and Childrens Court Act 1992. While the intent to improve public safety is acknowledged, the provisions outlined fundamentally misunderstand the causes of youth offending and the pathways to rehabilitation. This submission strongly opposes measures such as “adult crime, adult time” and the removal of detention as a last resort. Instead, it advocates alternative, evidence-based programs like Transition 2 Success (T2S) and the use of arts-based interventions to reduce recidivism and support youth rehabilitation.

Position on the Bill
The Bill seeks to:
1. Treat children as adults in the criminal justice system by introducing “adult crime, adult time.”
2. Remove the principle that detention is a last resort and that non-custodial orders are more effective in reintegrating youth into society.
3. Permit a child’s criminal history to be included in adult sentencing.
4. Enable victims and the media to participate more broadly in criminal proceedings involving children.
These measures are regressive and fail to acknowledge the developmental, social, and psychological differences between children and adults. Treating children as adults in the criminal justice system has been shown to perpetuate cycles of re-offending and harm, rather than achieving meaningful reform or community safety.

Alternative Approaches
1. Transition 2 Success (T2S): A Proven Model for Youth Rehabilitation
T2S is a program that provides at-risk youth with access to vocational training, mentorship, and life skills development. Evaluations have shown that participants in T2S are significantly less likely to re-offend compared to peers who experience incarceration. Rather than punishing youth, T2S emphasises early intervention, accountability, and pathways to employment and social inclusion. Expanding and investing in such initiatives should be prioritised over punitive measures.
2. The Cathartic Power of the Arts
Arts-based programs are transformative tools for youth in the justice system. Engaging in creative activities enables young people to process trauma, express emotions, and rebuild self-worth. Creative Recovery projects, for example, have successfully supported youth affected by natural disasters, and similar principles can be applied to the justice context. Storytelling, music, visual arts, and drama empower participants to envision a future beyond offending and reduce stigma associated with their past actions.
3. Evidence Against Incarceration
Studies consistently demonstrate that incarceration for young people leads to worse outcomes, including higher rates of recidivism, disrupted education, and long-term unemployment. Detention disproportionately impacts marginalised communities, exacerbating existing inequalities. By contrast, community-based interventions foster personal growth and societal reintegration.

Concerns with the Bill’s Amendments
1. Detention as a Last Resort
Removing this principle undermines decades of juvenile justice reform and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory. Detention should remain an option of last resort, used only when there is no viable alternative.
2. “Adult Crime, Adult Time”
Children lack the developmental maturity and foresight of adults. This approach erodes principles of justice by ignoring the rehabilitative potential of young offenders and exposes them to the negative influences of adult correctional environments.
3. Publicising Youth Proceedings
Allowing media access to children’s proceedings risks further stigmatising vulnerable youth. Public shaming can hinder rehabilitation and disproportionately harm children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Recommendations
To create safer communities and reduce youth crime:
1. Reject amendments that increase the punitive approach to youth offending, such as “adult crime, adult time” and the removal of detention as a last resort.
2. Expand investment in programs like Transition 2 Success that focus on education, skills development, and employment pathways for

at-risk youth.3.Incorporate arts-based interventions into rehabilitation strategies, recognising their unique power to address trauma and build resilience.4.Ensure compliance with international human rights standards, including upholding the best interests of the child in justice proceedings.The Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 risks escalating cycles of youth offending rather than addressing their root causes. Evidence supports alternative, rehabilitative approaches that provide young people with the tools to transform their lives. This submission urges Parliament to reject the punitive measures proposed and instead invest in programs that genuinely make Queensland safer by breaking the cycle of re-offending and building a future of hope for vulnerable youth.