

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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To the Honourable Members of Parliament, As a concerned parent of a 10-year-old child, I feel compelled to express my strong opposition to the proposed Bill that seeks to allow children as young as 10 to be tried as adults for serious crimes. I find it both deeply troubling and fundamentally unjust that such a proposal is even being considered. I am also deeply upset by the terrifyingly short period that has been provided for submissions. The human brain is known to undergo significant development well into a person's mid-20s. Neuroscientific research has consistently shown that children, particularly those as young as 10, lack the cognitive maturity necessary to fully understand the long-term consequences of their actions. At this age, children's brains are still developing in areas related to impulse control, risk assessment, and decision-making. As such, it is unreasonable to hold them to the same standards as adults in criminal matters. They are, by nature, still learning how to navigate the complexities of the world around them. The impact of this Bill would be particularly devastating for children from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds. These children are often already grappling with significant challenges such as poverty, trauma, and abuse. To subject them to the adult criminal justice system without considering their specific circumstances or developmental needs would not only be an injustice but a violation of their fundamental human rights. It is vital to acknowledge the importance of rehabilitation over punishment for children, especially when their actions may stem from unmet emotional or psychological needs. While crime and its consequences are undeniably tragic, it is essential to remember that children are capable of growth and change. The goal should not be to punish but to provide the necessary education, support, and rehabilitation to help children learn from their mistakes and reintegrate into society in a positive way. Sending children to adult prisons, where they are often exposed to further harm, is neither a solution nor a path to justice. We must prioritise programs that offer these young individuals the opportunity to heal and change, rather than subjecting them to an adult prison system that will likely deepen their trauma and hinder their development. It is deeply concerning that this Bill appears to have been formulated without adequate consultation with child psychologists or developmental experts, as it is in direct conflict with the science. These experts consistently advocate for a different approach—one that focuses on rehabilitation, restorative justice, and age-appropriate interventions rather than punitive measures. It is striking that, in contrast to this Bill, children under the age of 16 are being increasingly protected from the dangers of social media due to concerns about their brain development and vulnerability to exploitation. The inconsistency in how we protect children in different contexts is troubling. If society recognises the developmental immaturity of children in one area (social media use), it stands to reason that we should apply the same principles to matters of justice. Denying children this fundamental protection in the criminal justice system is both hypocritical and deeply harmful. In light of the overwhelming evidence about brain development, the needs of vulnerable children, and the clear path of rehabilitation over punitive punishment, I urge Parliament to reject this Bill in its entirety. The proposal to try 10-year-old children as adults is not only counterproductive but unjust. I call upon Parliament to prioritize the well-being, rights, and future of children by ensuring that the justice system recognises their developmental stage and provides appropriate measures for their rehabilitation. Thank you for considering my submission.