

## Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 51  
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**Publication:** Making the submission public but withholding your name  
**Attachments:** See attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**

## Submission for the 'Inquiry into Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024'

As a young woman, I am unfortunately aware that I am a member of a demographic group that faces high rates of violence and who are often victims of violent crimes. As a young woman, I am also aware of how kids are these days, and sorts of things that happen both on and offline. However, as a twenty-two-year-old who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice, I am appalled that this Bill is even on the table, let alone under such an unassuming, positively framed name.

This Bill, masquerading under a facade of making Queensland safer, is carried on the back of media sensationalism. As a habitual afternoon TV watcher (rare for someone of my age, I know), I witness firsthand the amount of fear that is drummed up by every single story that flashes past with the eye-catching "Youth Crime Epidemic" banner. Almost every day, another story of a teenage stabbing, theft, or a new break in scrolls past, leaving watchers concerned. In witnessing these new stories almost daily for weeks at a time, I would forgive someone for assuming that youth crime is out of control, that the violent crime rate is spiking higher and higher and that those damn kids are to blame. Though, strangely enough, I've noticed quite a lack of those stories since the end of the Queensland Election season. How odd! Anyhow, with a simple Google, these heightened rates of youth crimes crumble against proper statistics and facts. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has fantastic reports yearly on the general violent crime rate, broken down by state, as well as data on youth offenders. This data shows an overall stable and even downward trend. If you were an average media consumer, however, the chance of any of this information ever making it across your screen is slim.

Furthermore, as a graduate Criminologist, I am downright appalled by the way this Bill has been marketed. The phrase "Adult Crime, Adult Time" is so wickedly crafted that no one pauses to consider what word is missing from it. Child. That person committing an "adult crime" is still a child. Labelling certain crimes as only ones adults commit is yet another way of glossing over the fact that children still commit them, and that the crime itself will never change the age of the offender. In what world is treating a twelve-year-old and a twenty-two-year-old the same ever going to solve things? When you put your child in time out for lashing out at a sibling without explaining to them what they have done, or giving them the chance to atone, the child does not learn. Now consider putting that child in time out with other children who are all embittered, and too young to properly grasp what is happening to them. This breeds criminogenic recidivism. Children will always misbehave, it is a part of their psychological development to test boundaries and authorities. Saying that these children "know the consequences" is hence a logical failure. They are CHILDREN. The consequences given to a child should always be appropriate to the age of the child, in tandem with the severity of the crime. Removing age as a factor fails to consider the child in the equation, which is a fundamental part of sentencing. Not to mention, putting a child away at such a young age, for such an amount of time that they leave the system as an adult will only serve to create further issues. Locking up a fourteen-year-old for "adult time" (sixteen years for example), leaves you with a grown thirty-year-old who has spent their formative years inside of the Criminal Justice System. Detention centres and prisons are a prime environment for criminal behaviours to be copied, learnt, and embedded, which runs the risk of increasing recidivism, which in turn creates adults who only know the system as they were essentially raised by it. That fourteen-year-old will have spent more years of their life inside of a detention centre than outside of it. On another note, how could anyone side with this atrocity of a Bill when it contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Our very own State Attorney General, Minister for Justice, and Minister for Integrity all admitted, while in adamant support of the Bill, that several provisions violate international law regarding children's rights. Why in the world would

you ever wish to push forth a Bill that stands in direct opposition to both the Australian Human Rights Act of 2019, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child?

As a victim of violent crimes myself, my empathy and heart stay with the victim, but as someone who has spent four years studying the topic and seeing the statistics first-hand, I have put my pain and suffering aside so that children are not exposed to the harms that stem from being treated like an adult during sentencing. This Bill seeks to coddle us victims, to hold our hand while covering our eyes to hide the root of the problem, and I for one refuse to be blinded.

This Bill is inhumane, ineffective and feeds off of victim's fear like a leech. This Bill has been crafted to make victims feel good, not to solve the problems of youth crime. You are putting these children out of sight, fifteen to twenty years down the track for another government to deal with when they inevitably become adults who have lost their formative years to our prison system for crimes they committed before their brains had fully developed. That is, of course, no excuse for the crime having been committed, but this Bill does not address the root causes of youth offending. A lack of a better future, a lack of resources, a lack of care for their lives. Instead, this Bill will give them a lack of time to grow. A lack of time to develop, to overcome, and to change. I implore anyone reading or hearing this to put their pain aside and deeply think about this issue. We cannot afford to kick the can further down the road. That can holds the next generation, my generation. You are doing us a disservice by even entertaining a Bill as horrid as this. This problem is not easily solved, but the studies are there, the statistics are there, and the groundwork has been laid. I don't have the answers, those things are better left to my former professors and the people who have the time to compile data and study it, but I can tell you with certainty that this Bill is not the answer.

Thank you.