

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Submitter Comments:

I have worked for 45 plus years as a psychologist and psychotherapist, beginning my career working with children and adolescents and for a time at Sir Lesley Wilson Youth Detention Centre where children as young as 10 were locked up. This step is a return to those days in the 1970s when there was little recognition of childhood complex trauma and its sequelae. Children who commit crimes need consequences and there certainly needs to be intervention but at the family and societal level also. Children are not born evil. Nor are they capable of considering consequences for their actions. Particularly boys. Their brains haven't developed sufficiently. Children who commit crimes uniformly have complex trauma backgrounds - due to dysfunctional families where there is mental illness, chronic ill health, despair in the adults, intergenerational trauma, or systemic neglect and abuse. These children do not have the cognitive and emotional functioning necessary to manage impulse control, boredom, stress reactions and respect for authority. It takes building trusting relationships with adults who dedicate time to them and get to know them as little people to help them grow their sense of self worth and self respect along with good teaching and reliable stable carer. This costs a lot of money but locking up children and adolescents for years will cost even more in the long run because children in jails will remain criminals for the rest of their lives. These children are the real victims of a neglectful society with politically popular bandaid solutions.

Children are our most vulnerable and also our future. The experts aware all saying adult time for adult crime for kids and the other proposed changes are against the evidence. Also from my experience this is true.