

## Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

**Submission No:** 65  
**Submitted by:** Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation  
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**Attachments:** See attachment  
**Submitter Comments:**



MURRI WATCH

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To the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee  
Re: Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation is a not for profit organisation established since 1991 just prior to the handing down of the Recommendations arising from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. One of the key services that we deliver, is the government funded Cell Visitors service and Youth Justice support service, where our teams visit young people held in watch houses across 6 cities in Queensland. The key demographic are young people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

In the financial year of 2023-2024, we have engaged with 395 young people under the age of 18, held in watch houses across Brisbane. 77% of young people held identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In the current financial year, since July 1<sup>st</sup> until November 30<sup>th</sup> we have already engaged with 173 young people under the age of 18, 73% of whom identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. Our Townsville service has seen 148 young people during the financial year of 2023-2024, 84% of whom identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Our young First Nations people are over-represented in Queensland Watch Houses. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Young People being seen in Brisbane Watch Houses alone, is alarming and calls for a Cultural Approach to addressing crime rates rather than an institutional approach. The implementation of this Bill will further exacerbate intergenerational trauma and harm to First Nations People and Communities, undermining efforts to strengthen and unify our nation during a pivotal time for reconciliation and community-building.

We strongly believe that there are other avenues that need to be undertaken to assist young people, especially our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to engage and reconnect to Community and Culture, rather than see them spend their developmental years in prison. Through working with Traditional Owners and respected Elders, we need to deliver on Country programs, including yarning circles, cultural healing and knowledge sharing to build strong cultural identities and support First Nations young people to return to a safe state that is culturally strong and reinforces cultural lore. It is through this reconnection that young people can learn to be productive, contributing members of their communities and be supported to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma that impacts them.

We urge you to reconsider the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024, and seek community insight to develop a far more strategic and culturally informed response to managing crime committed by young people in Queensland.

Sincerely,

Ken Georgetown

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**CEO Murri Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation**

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