

## Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Committee Secretariat  
Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee  
JICSC@parliament.qld.gov.au

To the Chair,

RE: Opposition to " Making Queensland Safer Bill"

[West End Community Association](#) (WECA) has been amplifying the voice and concerns of our members for a liveable urban community(West End, South Brisbane, Hill End, WoMo, Highgate Hill) since 2004.

WECA's members are deeply concerned about the *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024* due to its potential impacts on the Kurilpa community, a place of profound significance for First Nations people and a longstanding hub of inclusion and support. Kurilpa's history as a gathering place reflects its commitment to fostering a diverse and welcoming environment, particularly for vulnerable populations and young people who are often drawn to its clustering of essential services and community support networks.

The West End Community Association (WECA) strongly opposes the **Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024**, which introduces punitive "Adult Time for Adult Crime" measures and removes the principle of detention as a last resort from the Youth Justice Act. This Bill not only undermines Queensland's **Human Rights Act** but also perpetuates harm against vulnerable young people, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, while failing to address the root causes of youth crime.

### Key Concerns

#### 1. Violation of Human Rights

- The Bill overrides fundamental human rights protections enshrined in Queensland's **Human Rights Act** and international agreements like the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**.
- It disregards a child's right to age-appropriate treatment and rehabilitation, instead subjecting them to punitive measures proven to exacerbate cycles of harm.

#### 2. Ineffectiveness of "Tough-on-Crime" Policies

- Evidence consistently shows that punitive measures, such as mandatory sentencing and harsher penalties, do not deter crime.
  - The Queensland Audit Office reports that 80% of children in detention reoffend within a year, with 94% of those aged 10–12 returning to supervision.
3. **Disproportionate Impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children**
    - Over 80% of incarcerated children aged 10–13 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This Bill further entrenches systemic racism and intergenerational trauma by criminalizing vulnerable children who face systemic disadvantages.
  4. **Undermining Rehabilitation and Community Safety**
    - Removing the principle of detention as a last resort denies children access to rehabilitative, therapeutic interventions.
    - Expanded access to children’s criminal history and public court proceedings risks stigmatizing young offenders, hindering reintegration and rehabilitation efforts.
  5. **Failure to Address Underlying Causes**
    - The Bill neglects critical systemic issues such as poverty, housing insecurity, mental health, and family violence, which contribute to youth offending.

## **Call to Action**

WECA urges the Queensland Government to:

1. **Restore Evidence-Based Principles**
  - Reinstate the principle of detention as a last resort and adopt restorative justice approaches that focus on rehabilitation and community reintegration.
2. **Engage Communities in Decision-Making**
  - Actively involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, community-controlled organizations, and local service providers in co-designing youth justice policies.
3. **Invest in Community-Led Solutions**
  - Redirect funding from detention facilities into social housing, mental health services, youth programs, and education initiatives.
4. **Address Structural Inequalities**
  - Tackle systemic drivers of youth crime through equitable access to support services, economic opportunities, and culturally safe care.
5. **End the Use of Watch Houses for Children**
  - Immediately halt the detention of children in adult watch houses, prioritizing alternatives that safeguard their rights and well-being.

## Justice and Compassion

WECA is alarmed by the rising punitive approach and harmful rhetoric towards vulnerable populations. Measures like cutting power to homeless encampments and "Adult Time for Adult Crime" policies signal a troubling departure from compassion and evidence-based solutions.

Harsh criminal law changes in the proposed bill would disproportionately impact vulnerable groups, threatening Kurilpa's legacy of care, inclusion, and cultural significance.

We urge the Queensland Government to reject this bill and instead pursue a humane, preventative youth justice system that fosters long-term community safety and equity.

Regards



Seleneah More  
President,  
West End Community Association

