

Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Dear Committee Secretariat I welcome the opportunity to provide this submission to the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 Inquiry. As a member of Queensland Quakers and as a constituent of the Sandgate electorate, I wish to express my grave concern that the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 will not make our community safer and is not consistent with Queensland's human rights obligations to children. I care for victims of crime as I have experienced a violent assault myself but realise that locking children up will only make the situation worse. The introduction of adult sentencing for serious offences by children, and removal of both detention as a last resort and the principle that non-custodial sentences are better for children, ignore concrete evidence that more time spent in custody increases the likelihood of re-offending. The blatant disregard of human rights is extremely concerning. Attorney-General, Deb Frecklington acknowledges incompatibility of the bill with both the QLD Human Rights Act 2019 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. She states the amendments mean more children will end up in detention and spend longer there. 72% of Queensland children in youth detention are First Nations. More than a third of children imprisoned in Queensland have been living in unstable or unsuitable housing. More than half have been impacted by domestic and family violence. Almost all come from low socioeconomic households. As such I believe this bill will cause more harm to vulnerable Queenslanders including children as young as 10 years old, and ultimately to the whole Queensland community. I fully support Amnesty International Australia's call for a justice reinvestment approach to managing public resources where money is redirected from prisons to community-based initiatives. Instead of harmful punitive approaches, justice reinvestment is evidence-based. It embraces therapeutic and rehabilitative methods like diversion programs that address the underlying causes of problematic behaviour in children. Diversion programs and services like this already exist in Queensland and other jurisdictions – and they're incredibly successful. Just some examples are: • Johnathan Thurston Academy, Cairns: Queensland Government Media Statements (2023), Study finds success in Far North youth program • Brodie Germaine Fitness, Mount Isa: ABC News (2023), First Nations man Brodie Germaine using gym, time on country to guide young men away from crime • Fitzroy Crossing's Night Place (WA): National Indigenous Times (2024) • Brother to Another (NT): Smarter Justice for Safer Communities (accessed Nov 2024) Such programs achieve long-term reduction in youth offending while costing Australians much less than the \$1 million it costs on average to incarcerate a child per year or to build new youth detention centres (\$627.61 million for the new Woodford facility). I call on the Queensland Government to rethink rushing through the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 and instead develop solutions which will address the multi-faceted root causes of serious youth offending to build safe and thriving communities. Yours sincerely, Frances Ann Long