

## **Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024**

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# Submission to Inquiry into the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024

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Many thanks for the opportunity to make this submission.

We are very disappointed that the Qld Government is proposing to sentence children as young as ten to a life in prison. I do acknowledge that their actions are not acceptable and that the repercussions on lives of those impacted are devastating. I just do not believe that this top-heavy approach is the answer. We do not believe that children aged 10-18 make decisions or act based on a penalty that may occur to them down the track if they get caught. Many would be acting out of desperation, or in a response bought about by previous trauma.

In our work, Naomi as a registered nurse, and her study in public health – especially looking at the social determinants of health, and her work as a volunteer breastfeeding counsellor, then Ashleigh as a Social Worker who case manages youth at risk of homelessness, are both acutely aware of the pressures and stress young families are under. This stress has impacts on the children in these families. Children can not choose the families they are born in to or have any control over the adults they are exposed to or the life that they live.

This is why the rights of the child need to be upheld. Children deserve and need our protection. Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the rights of the Child.

Children do not have the same decision-making capacity as adults, are at a different developmental stage of their lives, and experience different vulnerabilities. This is why it's important to have different approaches for young people in contact with the criminal justice system compared to adults, including different approaches to rehabilitation that incorporate therapeutic supports to meet their specific needs.

Instead of being tougher on crime we need to be tougher on ending poverty. Committed to making sure children have access to mental health services. And ensuring they don't slip through the cracks at school.

We ask you to please reconsider these changes and prioritise young family wellbeing and social supports with the aim of long-term change in preventing youth crime. We ask that you

- Prioritise investments and policies that enable the community services sector, with a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, to lead the way in addressing the root causes of youth crime and make all Queenslanders feel safe in their communities.
- Fund and implement an alternative, community service-led response to children under the age of 14 years old who are interacting with the justice system. The response must be supportive and therapeutic in nature. It should also adopt principles of restorative justice, ensuring that the needs of victims continue to be met.
- Implement policies to end the poverty cycle, ensure children have homes to live in and access to mental health services.
- End the use of adult watch houses for the detention of children and create viable pathways for diversion and rehabilitation, including community services available 24/7 for young people and families across Queensland.

Thank you,

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