

## **Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025**

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<b>Submitted by:</b>	Alcohol and Drug Foundation
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14 April 2025

Committee Secretariat  
Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Members,

Re: Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025

The Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF) welcomes the opportunity to comment on this Bill. The ADF delivers evidence-based approaches to minimise alcohol and other drug (AOD) harm. We recognise the power of strong communities and the important role they play in preventing problems occurring in the first place. A community-centric approach is at the heart of everything we do.

The ADF is concerned about the amendments introduced in the proposed Bill, particularly those relating to introducing significant criminal penalties for children and young people relating to drug trafficking. Given the significant harms associated with criminalisation and contact with the criminal justice system for children and young people, the ADF does not support this Bill.

### **Harms from criminalisation**

The harms associated with contact with the criminal justice system are well known. For example, punitive drug policies have contributed to HIV and hepatitis C transmission and increases in fatal overdoses.<sup>1-3</sup> Criminalisation also plays a significant role in creating and maintaining stigma towards people who use drugs. Stigma contributes to segregation and exclusion and can lead to poorer mental health outcomes and influence the quality of treatment received by people using alcohol and other drugs. Additionally, interactions with police, incarceration and costly legal proceedings all contribute to costs to the individuals, police, courts, and society as a whole. Those who continue to be affected by criminalisation are often also those who are more likely to be in contact with police, including young people from disadvantaged and marginalised communities.

An illicit drug conviction can also ruin, disrupt and disable a young person's life in ways that have serious long-term consequences. These include incarceration, rupturing close familial and personal relationships, and closing career, employment and travel options due to the stigma of a criminal record.<sup>4, 5</sup> These consequences can exacerbate risk factors for ongoing contact with the criminal justice system and AOD harms, such as lack of attachment to school and community, family conflict, isolation and unemployment.<sup>6, 7</sup>

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**The role of targeted prevention initiatives**

The ADF recommends that the Queensland government invest in prevention initiatives that are tailored to children and young people at increased risk of AOD harm and contact with the justice system. Effective AOD prevention modifies risk and protective factors for AOD harm, operating within the local community using based approaches. Return on investment for prevention is high, with every \$1 spent on prevention returning \$14.<sup>8</sup> Despite this, funding is declining with the proportion of government spending on prevention of drug related harm dropping from 9.5% in 2009-10 to 6.7% in 2021-22.<sup>9, 10</sup>

Prevention messaging and efforts vary for people of different ages. Targeting prevention and creating tailored support that is meaningful and relevant is most likely to change behaviour.<sup>11</sup> For example, key risk factors for risky AOD use specific to children and young people include negative peer influence, family conflict and lack of engagement in activities with positive role models, while protective factors include parent/carer involvement, participation in positive social activities, and sense of belonging in the community.<sup>12, 13</sup>

The risk factors that promote alcohol and drug problems are similar to the risk factors that lead to youth offending. These include family conflict, peer pressure, mental health problems, early and excessive alcohol and other drug use. By strengthening the personal and social protective factors we can lower the risk that young people will engage in problematic drug use and antisocial and criminal behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

The ADF has recently completed a pilot of the Stronger through Sport (STS) program, which used small grants to enable participation in sport for young people at risk of disengagement and contact with the justice system. The program leverages the ADF's long-running and evidence-based Good Sports program, which works to modify risk and protective factors for AOD harm in communities using sporting clubs and their practices and culture surrounding AOD.<sup>15, 16</sup>

Evaluation of the STS pilot found that 94% of young people in the program completed a season of sport, boosting their engagement and protective factors. Additionally, clubs reported feeling supported by the ADF, and found that the program benefited their clubs, while referring agencies and young people also found the program highly beneficial, with 90% of young people who completed the program responding 'a lot' when asked how much they trusted the people in their club, how much they wanted to keep playing, whether they felt a sense of belonging, and how much they felt part of the team.

The ADF thanks the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee for the opportunity to comment on this Bill.

Sincerely,



**Martin Milne**  
State Manager QLD



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