



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

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Subject: Proposal for the "Adult Crime, Adult Time" Bill to Amend Sentencing Practices and the Youth Justice Act in Queensland

Introduction

The justice system in Queensland is at a critical juncture, particularly in its handling of juvenile crime. The current framework under the Youth Justice Act provides leniency that, while well-intentioned, has inadvertently emboldened young offenders. Juveniles who commit heinous crimes are shielded from accountability, and youth detention centres have become environments that fail to deter future criminal activity. This submission proposes the introduction of the "Adult Crime, Adult Time" Bill to address these shortcomings through raised minimum sentences, a reevaluation of detention centre conditions, and amendments to the Youth Justice Act to ensure appropriate consequences for serious offenses committed by young individuals.

1. Raising Minimum Sentences

The ineffectiveness of maximum sentences lies in the fact that judges in Queensland rarely, if ever, impose the harshest penalties available. This has rendered the concept of a maximum sentence virtually symbolic. To restore public confidence in the justice system and ensure proportional punishment, the "Adult Crime, Adult Time" Bill should focus on increasing minimum sentences for serious juvenile offenses. Raised minimum sentences would serve as a practical mechanism to ensure that those convicted of severe crimes face meaningful consequences, reflecting the gravity of their actions.

2. Amendments to the Youth Justice Act

The Youth Justice Act, in its current form, prioritizes rehabilitation over accountability to an extent that undermines its effectiveness as a deterrent. The following amendments are proposed:

- **Increased Transparency:** Amendments should include a requirement for judges to explain any deviation from imposing harsher penalties, particularly for repeat or violent offenders.

- **Harsher Sentences for Repeat Offenders:** Juvenile criminals with a history of recidivism should face escalated penalties to address the risks they pose to public safety.
- **Reduced Protections for Violent Crimes:** Offenses involving violence, weapons, or other aggravating factors should be met with penalties that align more closely with those imposed on adult offenders.

3. Reforming Youth Detention Centres

Youth detention centres have become environments that are perceived by offenders themselves as lenient and even enjoyable. This perception undermines their intended function as facilities for correction and rehabilitation. To address this, the following changes are recommended:

- **Stricter Regimens:** Detention centres should implement more structured daily routines, mandatory education programs, and skill-building workshops to emphasize discipline and personal responsibility.
- **Reduced Amenities:** Amenities that make detention centres akin to "holiday camps" should be minimized to reflect the seriousness of incarceration.
- **Increased Accountability:** Regular audits should ensure that detention centres are functioning as environments for rehabilitation, not recreation.

4. Justification for the Proposed Changes

Public safety and justice demand a legal framework that addresses the evolving nature of crime among juveniles. Shielding young offenders from the consequences of their actions only perpetuates cycles of criminal behavior. By enacting the "Adult Crime, Adult Time" Bill, Queensland can:

- Deter future crimes by ensuring serious consequences for serious offenses.
- Rebuild public trust in the justice system by demonstrating a commitment to accountability.
- Protect communities from the harm caused by repeat juvenile offenders.

Conclusion

The proposed "Adult Crime, Adult Time" Bill is a necessary step toward reforming Queensland's justice system. By raising minimum sentences, amending the Youth Justice Act, and reforming youth detention centres, the government can ensure that justice is served while also deterring future crime. I urge the relevant authorities to prioritize the safety of the community and the integrity of the justice system by supporting this Bill.

Thank you for considering this submission. I am available to provide further information or discuss these proposals in greater detail.

Sincerely,

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