

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

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## ***Voice for Victims* response in support of the Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time)**

### **Amendment Bill 2025**

#### *Putting Victims at the Centre of Justice*

The **Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill 2025** represents a crucial shift in our justice system—one that places the safety, dignity, and rights of victims at the forefront.

For too long, victims of serious crimes have carried the weight of trauma, fear, and frustration, often feeling that justice does not reflect the harm they've endured—especially when that harm is inflicted by youth offenders committing adult-level crimes. This Bill responds directly to that injustice. It sends an unequivocal message: **when a serious crime is committed, the age of the offender does not lessen the impact on the victim.**

Victims of crimes such as **rape, attempted murder, kidnapping, and torture** live with lifelong consequences. Their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being is often permanently affected. The current disparity in sentencing between youth and adult offenders for the most violent and harmful crimes can compound this trauma by suggesting that the seriousness of the offence is diminished because of the offender's age.

This legislation goes towards correcting that imbalance. By expanding the *Adult Crime, Adult Time* provisions to include more of the most serious and violent offences, the Bill ensures victims can see justice being done—justice that is reflective of the severity of the crime and the suffering endured. For many, this is not about punishment for punishment's sake—it's about **validation, recognition**, and the right to **feel safe and heard** within the justice system.

The Bill also provides a more victim-sensitive approach to communication. Allowing individuals registered on the *eligible persons register* to nominate someone to receive custody updates on their behalf gives victims control over how and when they receive potentially distressing information. This thoughtful amendment respects the emotional toll these updates can carry and supports victims in managing their recovery on their terms.

While the Bill does engage with important human rights considerations, particularly concerning young offenders, *Voice for Victims* is conscious **the rights of victims to feel safe, justice and healing must be given equal weight** and should not be diminished due to the offender's age.

In addition, this Bill still allows courts the flexibility to consider individual circumstances and pathways to rehabilitation where appropriate. *Voice for Victims* is a strong advocate for an overhaul of youth detention options in Queensland and an expansion of early intervention programs.

Victims recognise penalties alone will not fix Queensland's youth crime crisis, and in addition to harsher sentences imposed on the worst offenders, we must engage actively in prevention, early intervention, diversion and rehabilitation both at the pre and post-custody stage, as well as during court processes along with a continuum of intensifying consequences, including detention.

Whilst in detention, we must see a focus on education, vocational training, skills development, work opportunities, developing pro-social peer groups and community reintegration.

Much also must be done to intervene in family systems that are broken and dysfunctional. We must provide structured options and opportunities for graduated and supervised release with alternate placement and accommodation options away from the environments that led to the offending.

*Voice for Victims* believes that when a young person appears before the court, the judge must determine whether they meet the criteria of a habitual offender. If so, the young person should be remanded in custody and their case fast-tracked to ensure swift adjudication.

At sentencing, if the young person is found to be a habitual offender, the court must impose the prescribed penalties under the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992*, including a mandatory 12-month detention order to be served fully and cumulatively—without reduction, remission, or the application of early release mechanisms.

For non-violent offenders, the habitual order applies after 1 year of detention; for violent offenders or those who offend while armed or in company with an armed person, it applies after 2 years—regardless of whether the weapon was used.

Habitual Offender Criteria:

- 10 or more breaches of bail; and
- The current alleged offence occurred while under supervision (bail, probation, parole, or another supervised release); and
- At least one of the current offences is similar to a previous offence for which the young person was found guilty (regardless of conviction status); and
- The frequency and nature of reoffending indicates a failure to respond to previous, less punitive interventions.

Reoffending similarly or more seriously within 12 months of intervention will be considered strong evidence of habitual offending. We accept Australia is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). However, Victims should be afforded the right to feel safe and secure. If a habitual, repeat and violent young offender has breached 80 bail orders, we have surely reached, the last resort.

Concerning the proposed amendments to *section 175(1)(da)* regarding restrictions on **Restorative Justice** (RJ), many victims have expressed a willingness to participate in the RJ process, recognising its potential to provide a sense of empowerment, healing, and closure. However, they are clear in their view that their participation should not lead to a reduction in the offender's sentence or lessen the offender's legal obligations.

*Voice for Victims* supports this legislation and commends the Government for standing with victims, recognising the depth of harm caused by serious offences, and delivering a system that no longer excuses violence based on youth alone. **Justice must reflect not only the nature of the offence but also the pain and courage of those who have survived it.**

**Trudy Reading & Natalie Merlehan**

**Voice for Victims**