



Crime Inquiry 2014 Submission 045

Submission to Legal Affairs and Community Safety Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland

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Amnesty International Australia

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About Amnesty International

Amnesty International is a worldwide movement to promote and defend all human rights enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) and other international instruments. Amnesty International undertakes research focused on preventing and ending abuses of these rights. Amnesty International is the world's largest independent human rights organisation, comprising more than 4 million supporters in more than 160 countries and has over 415, 980 supporters in Australia. Amnesty International is impartial and independent of any government, political persuasion or religious belief. Amnesty International Australia does not receive funding from governments or political parties.

Executive Summary

Amnesty International welcomes this inquiry by the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee. The organisation calls on Queensland to prioritise diversionary policies for youth, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and re-introduce detention as a last resort into sentencing protocols for young offenders.

Amnesty International recommends that the government consider the submissions, report and recommendations of the 2013 Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into Justice Reinvestment and the 2011 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system.

In implementing best practice in preventative and diversionary approaches, Amnesty International urges the Queensland government to work alongside the youth, community and legal sectors including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Introduction

Amnesty International has long called for a holistic approach to addressing crime and community safety, one which prioritises prevention strategies and addresses the root causes of criminal activity. The organisation continues to advocate for justice responses which are evidence-based and reflect international best practice and human rights standards.

The over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the justice systems across Australia and the high rates of repeat offending have raised serious concerns for some time. Amnesty International is currently conducting research as well as working in collaboration with other organisations to identify recommendations for state and territory governments, including Queensland, to reduce the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. Amnesty International would welcome the opportunity to brief members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee on its research findings when they will be completed next year.

In line with Amnesty International's current research into Indigenous Youth Incarceration rates, this submission focuses predominantly on policy responses to address youth justice. In this submission Amnesty International seeks to draw attention to some of the expansive research findings both in Australia and internationally that conclusively demonstrate the effectiveness of Justice Reinvestment, early intervention and divisionary approaches to preventing and reducing criminal behaviour.

Amnesty International calls on the Queensland government to take heed of initiatives in other jurisdictions and commit to implementing similarly successful policies.

As in previous submissions, ¹ Amnesty International calls on the Queensland government to implement, in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally appropriate initiatives, aimed at reducing Indigenous youth incarceration rates.

Amnesty International also urges members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to personally champion within the Queensland Parliament the need for a preventative and holistic approach to justice, particularly juvenile justice. Members of the Committee are strongly encouraged to advocate for the importance of Queensland implementing policies which focus on Justice Reinvestment; early intervention and diversion.

Imprisonment

When considering juvenile justice responses, international human rights law requires governments protect the best interests of the child and consider the special needs of children. This means prioritising rehabilitation and restorative justice objectives when dealing with young offenders which can be done in concert with implementing effective public safety policies.²

This emphasis on prevention is reflected in the Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators Juvenile Justice Standards released in 2009. These state that jurisdictions must implement juvenile justice systems which "balance the principles of accountability and proportionality, minimise formal intervention and seek opportunity for restorative justice and reintegration into the community of children and young people involved in the system".3

In 2012 the New South Wales Law Reform Commission described the special characteristics of young people as including: a lack of knowledge and experience; dependence; impulsivity and lack of foresight; difficult life circumstances; as well as different capacities acknowledged in other laws and the impact of remand on young people.4 Protecting the best interests of the child and the recognition of young people's immaturity and needs led to the establishment of the international legal principle of detention as a resort. This principle is legislated in all Australian states and territories except for Queensland.5

There is overwhelming evidence that imposing custodial sentences on young people significantly increases the risk of recidivism. National data released by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in 2013 indicates that 63 percent of young people with sentenced supervision had returned to sentenced supervision within two years.⁶

A 2010 New South Wales study found with regard to bail compliance, arrests of children in breach of their bail conditions had not reduced recidivism, but rather "evidence suggests that holding children and young people on remand increases the likelihood of further offending". This is also relevant to custodial sentencing which has been found to be the "most significant factor in increasing the odds of recidivism".8

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¹ including in response to the Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014 available here: ACSC/2014/YouthJustice2014/submissions/019..pdf and Feedback on the http://www.parliament.gld.gov.au/documents/committees Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice in Queensland ² Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 10: Children's rights in juvenile justice, UN Doc CRC/C/GC/10 (2007) [10].

³ AJJA: Juvenile Justice Standards 2009, http://svc201.wic007wss.server-web.com/Home/AJJA%20Standards/ 2012%20Updated%20October%202012%20-%20AJJA%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Standards%202009%20Part% 201%20and%202.pdf

NSW Law Reform Commission 2012 Bail Report, Chapter 11 Special Needs and vulnerabilities, Available at: http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/Prod/la/LATabDoc.nsf/0/b34f786933b1dd9eca257a1c00213556/\$FILE/r133.pdf

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Youth Justice - http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/ ⁶ AIHW, December 2013 'Using the Juvenile Justice National Minimum Data Set to measure Juvenile Recidivism', Available at: http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=60129545507

A Strategic Review of the NSW Juvenile Justice System, Noetic Solutions Pty Limited, p102-103; Available at: http://www.djj.nsw.gov.au/pdf_htm/publications/general/Juvenile%20Justice%20Review%20Report%20FINAL.pdf http://www.aihw.gov.au/youth-justice/

It is worthwhile noting that nationally 50 percent of youth in detention are on remand and unsentenced but in Queensland it was 84 percent in 2012-2013. In Queensland between 2008-2009 and 2012-2013 the number of young people in un-sentenced detention on an average day rose from 78 to 138.10

Overseas jurisdictions have encountered similar experiences with detention and increased recidivism. Two separate US based studies released in 2006 found that between 60 and 70 percent of young people who were given custodial sentences were back in custody less than three years after their release.11

The Queensland Attorney General frequently refers to the statistic that 30 percent of young people in Queensland detention are on at least their fifth custodial sentence. 12

Amnesty International welcomed earlier this year the announcement by the Western Australian government that it was establishing a Youth Justice Board to help reduce youth incarceration rates in the state. 13 At the time of the announcement Amnesty International called on other jurisdictions around Australia to introduce similar initiatives to address youth detention.

In 2011 the Federal House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Affairs Committee conducted an inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system. One of its recommendations called for:

> The Australian Institute of Criminology to undertake an analysis of sentencing options and outcomes for Indigenous youth and young adults and the use of available diversionary options to determine whether alternative sentencing options are fully utilised before resorting to incarceration¹⁴

Amnesty International recommends:

- The Queensland government prioritise diversionary policies
- The Queensland government re-introduce detention as a last resort into sentencing protocol for young offenders

Justice Reinvestment

The support and adoption of Justice Reinvestment policies is growing within Australia and internationally. This concept which emerged out of the United States emphasises a data-driven approach to improve public safety, reduce corrections and related criminal justice spending, and reinvest savings in strategies that can decrease crime and reduce recidivism. 15 It has been introduced into 19 states across the US and has had tangible success in states including Texas, California, Oklahoma, Kansas and Oregon.¹⁶

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, April 2014 'Youth Justice in Australia 2012-2013'. Available at: http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129546897

¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, April 2014, 'Queensland: youth justice supervision

in 2012–13', Available at: http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129546875

11 Holman, B and Zieldenberg (2006) "The Dangers of Detention" Washington, DC: Justice Policy Institute: 4, available at: http://www.justicepolicy.org/uploads/justicepolicy/documents/dangers_of_detention.pdf

² Queensland Attorney General Jarrod Bleijie interview with Patrick Condon, 4BC, 31 January 2014

¹³ Amnesty International media release, 9 April 2014, 'WA: Promising moves to reduce youth incarceration rates' Available at: http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/34304/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+AmnestyInt ernationalAustraliaNews+Amnesty+International+Australia+News

⁴ House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 20 June 2011, 'Doing Time - Time For Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system' recommendation 28, Available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=atsia/sentencing/report.htm Justice Center, http://csgjusticecenter.org/jr/about/.

¹⁶ Aboriginal Legal Services of Western Australia, 'Justice Reinvestment Forum: Build Communities Not Prisons' May 2011. Available

at: http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=190%3Ajustice-reinvestment-forum-build-communities-notprisons&catid=22&Itemid=57

The state of Oregon reduced its juvenile justice detention rate by 72 percent, improved community conditions in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods and saved millions of dollars on prison costs after introducing Justice Reinvestment policies.¹⁷

Similarly the state of California reduced the number of young people detained in its youth detention facilities by 84 percent from 1996 to the end 2011. California Department of Justice figures reveal the juvenile arrest rate also declined by 32 percent during this time affirming that a Justice Reinvestment approach does not sacrifice public safety. Between 2002 and 2011 New York City also reduced institutional placements of young offenders by 62 percent while experiencing a 31 percent decline in arrests of juveniles.

As well as reducing recidivism, jurisdictions with law and order responsibilities make significant savings by investing in diversionary and rehabilitative initiatives as these costs are a fraction of cost of running and operating prisons. ²¹ In Texas the youth incarceration rate dropped by 63 percent between 2006 and 2011. The state saved \$115 million when it was able to close two juvenile facilities, \$45.7 million of the savings were allocated to diversionary programs.²²

The Justice Reinvestment concept reflects the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime which emphasise socio-economic development and inclusion; integration of crime prevention into relevant social and economic policies; and focus on integration of at risk communities, children, families and youth.²³

Using a Justice Reinvestment framework, the New Zealand government last year committed to reducing re-offending by 25 percent by 2017. Working alongside community groups and stakeholders the New Zealand government plans to reduce re-offending by among other initiatives: increasing the availability of drug and alcohol treatment for offenders; expanding effective rehabilitation programs; developing a Youth Strategy to maximise rehabilitation options for young offenders; expanding education and training programs; and fostering partnerships with communities to support offenders' social and accommodation needs.²⁴

In announcing this commitment the Minister of Corrections stated:

I want Corrections to take local approaches to reduce re-offending. Communities know their people; they know what works and what doesn't work. Corrections will engage more with communities to find local solutions that will help offenders to turn their lives around and become a contributing member of their community...

Everything the Department of Corrections does is about ensuring the safety of the people of New Zealand. That is the bottom line. The Department has the opportunity to reduce reoffending and make New Zealand a better place to live in. Working with its justice sector partners, I know that Corrections will ably play its part in reducing crime.²⁵

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¹⁸ Sentencing Project, April 2013 'Ending Mass Incarceration: Charting a New Justice Reinvestment' p 27. Available at: http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/sen_Charting%20a%20New%20Justice%20Reinvestment.pdf

²⁰ Ibid

²¹Aboriginal Legal Services of Western Australia, 'Justice Reinvestment Forum: Build Communities Not Prisons' May 2011. Available at: http://www.als.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=190%3Ajustice-reinvestment-forum-build-communities-not-prisons&catid=22&Itemid=57

²² Sentencing Project, April 2013 'Ending Mass Incarceration: Charting a New Justice Reinvestment' p 27. Available at: http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/sen_Charting%20a%20New%20Justice%20Reinvestment.pdf

²³ http://www.aic.gov.au/crime_community/crimeprevention/ncpf/ncpf-overview.html#footnote_1

http://www.corrections.govt.nz/resources/statement_of_intent_2013-2016/reducing_re-offending.html

In 2013 the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs conducted an inquiry into the value of a Justice Reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia. The inquiry received 131 submissions which are still available to view. 26 The report's recommendations were overwhelmingly supportive of Australian jurisdictions committing to and adopting Justice Reinvestment initiatives.

In Australia many research and community groups are investigating the potential for implementation of Justice Reinvestment strategies across Australia's different jurisdictions including Just Reinvest NSW; Smart Justice; the Australian Justice Reinvestment Project through the University of New South Wales and Global Centre for Evidence-based Corrections and Sentencing at Queensland's Griffith University.

Amnesty International **recommends**:

- The Queensland government follow international and Australian best practice and prioritise the development of Justice Reinvestment strategies
- The Queensland government review the submissions and implement the recommendations from the 2013 Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry into Justice Reinvestment

Early intervention

In its feedback to the draft Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice in Queensland released by the Attorney General's Department earlier this year, Amnesty International welcomed that one of the guiding principles underpinning the draft Blueprint was early intervention.

Given the consensus that incarcerating young people can aggravate recidivism as opposed to acting as a deterrent, it is imperative that the primary aims of youth justice initiatives be to divert at risk-young people from the formal justice system through early intervention; rehabilitation and restorative justice approaches (such as police and court ordered youth justice conferencing and the youth Murri Courts).2

The Australasian Juvenile Justice Administrators' 2009 Juvenile Justice Standards recommend diversionary tactics to "minimise entry and/or progression through the juvenile justice system" as best practice when dealing with youth offenders or at-risk youth. ²⁸ This includes reducing offending by working with families and the support networks of children and young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system. The Juvenile Justice Standards call for services aimed at reducing reoffending be delivered in a way which promotes children, young people, their families and support networks to actively participate in assessment, case planning and decision making. The Standards also call for services to seek cultural advice and consultation with family and community members regarding children and young people who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and for this advice to inform their service delivery.

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs also recommended a nationwide program that begins the rehabilitative process of young Indigenous offenders from the point at which they are charged with an offence.²⁹

²⁶ Full set of recommendations available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/Completed_inquiries/2010-13/justicereinvestment/report/b02

http://aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/rpp/rpp127.pdf

²⁸ AJJA: Juvenile Justice Standards 2009, http://svc201.wic007wss.server-web.com/Home/AJJA%20Standards/

^{2012%20}Updated%20October%202012%20-%20AJJA%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Standards%202009%20Part% 201%20and%202.pdf House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, 20 June 2011, 'Doing Time - Time For Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system' recommendation 30, Available at:

http://www.aph.gov.au/parliamentary_business/committees/house_of_representatives_committees?url=atsia/sentencing/report.htm

A 2010 strategic review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System equally found that "addressing risk factors, intervening early and preventing children and young people from entering the juvenile justice system is the most cost effective approach".³⁰ In 2013 a NSW Attorney General Department report further elaborated on this by stating that interventions aimed at reducing criminal activity need to be provided at the first indication that the juvenile is at risk of continued offending.³¹ The report states:

'Available knowledge about juvenile offending points to the need for early intervention, and where possible, intervention that comes before contact with the criminal justice system. There is strong evidence that suggests that early intervention can reduce antisocial behaviour in children and delinquent behaviour in adolescents, especially for those living in disadvantaged communities'.³²

The report identifies the following risk factors which can lead to a young person becoming involved in criminal activity: antisocial attitudes; antisocial peers; anti social personality patterns; history of anti social behaviour; problematic home environment; problems and lack of achievement at school/work; problematic leisure and recreational activities; and substance abuse. These are environmental risk factors which are amenable to intervention and change. There are a number of risk factors which also increase the likelihood of a young person's involvement in crime which cannot be changed. These include: number of contacts with the criminal justice system; offence type; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status; experience of trauma; and age at first contact with the criminal justice system. ³⁴

For interventions to be successful the report stresses the need for individually tailored programs to suit a young person's specific risks, needs and responsive factors. Programs proven to reduce offending behaviour in young people include: rehabilitation; skills training; re-engagement with education; aggression replacement training; functional families therapies; cognitive behavioural therapy; community employment; drug treatment; and early intervention programs targeted at preschool and primary school children.³⁵ Interventions that have been found not to be successful include: specific deterrence interventions; compliance only supervised probation or parole; home confinement; and correctional boot camps.³⁶

Amnesty International recommends:

The Queensland government work alongside the youth, community and legal sectors
to identify the best preventative and diversionary approaches. These include evidence
relating to reducing risk-factors and strengthening protective ones and effective early
intervention strategies

Alternative dispute resolution

Amnesty International welcomes the potential re-introduction of court referred Youth Justice Conferencing as outlined in the draft Blueprint for the Future of Youth Justice in Queensland released for feedback earlier this year. These restorative justice processes brought young people

Report for the Minister for Juvenile Justice, April 2010 'A Strategic Review of the New South Wales Juvenile Justice System' p87, Available at: http://www.djj.nsw.gov.au/pdf_htm/publications/general/Juvenile%20Justice%20Review%20Report%20FINAL.pdf
NSW Attorney General Department 'Youth on Track: A model for early intervention with young people', p6 Available at: http://www.youthontrack.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/agdbasev7wr/_assets/yot/m771002l2/youthontrackreport_web.pdf
Ibid

³³ Ibid, p 7

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, 10.

³⁶ Ibid.

together with their victims. The 2011-2012 Queensland Children's Court annual report said this referral process had a 98 percent approval rating among all participants -victims and perpetrators included.³⁷

The re-established court referred Youth Justice Conferencing must continue to focus on delivering restorative justice solutions. When developing the revised program, Amnesty International urges the Queensland government to consider some of the innovative justice initiatives being trialled around Australia. This includes the Neighbourhood Justice Centre in Victoria which is Australia's first community justice model and includes community based programs including young adult restorative justice conferencing; use of mediation in court; an integrated in reach service model; a community justice advisory group; and community building.³⁸ This initiative is modelled on the Red Hook Community Centre in a geographically and socially isolated neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York. This was the first multi-jurisdictional court in the United States and addresses neighbourhood problems using a coordinated community approach. Since this Brooklyn community justice centre opened in 2000 it has reduced the use of jail for misdemeanour by 50 percent; has a 75 percent compliance rate with court orders – a 50 percent improvement from standard court orders; approval ratings of police and justice system have tripled; a survey found that 94 percent of the local community supported the community court and the percentage of Red Hook residents who said they were afraid to walk in the neighbourhood at night has dropped by 42 percent.³⁹

Conclusion

Amnesty International urges members of the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee to take heed of the initiatives being introduced in Australia and globally aimed at preventing and reducing crime which adopt a Justice Reinvestment approach and focus on early intervention and diversion. The uptake of such approaches continues to increase. Jurisdictions which have implemented Justice Reinvestment models have made considerable financial savings by reducing incarceration rates and have reduced recidivism and arrest rates.

This submission sought to provide examples of the wealth of research and initiatives available to policy makers tackling community safety and crime prevention. Amnesty International calls on the Committee to recommend the Queensland government adopt a Justice Reinvestment approach to crime prevention and for members of the Committee to advocate in favour of such models with their parliamentary colleagues.

³⁷ Childrens Court of Queensland Annual Report 2011-2012, p 7 Available at: http://www.courts.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/168202/cc-ar-2011-2012.pdf ³⁸ http://www.neighbourhoodjustice.vic.gov.au/home/about+us/innovations/

³⁹ http://www.courtinnovation.org/project/red-hook-community-justice-center