



## Justice • Rights • Reconciliation

The Secretary

Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee

**By Email:** [lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lacsc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

Antar Qld is grateful for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to the 'Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2014.

In 2013 48% of juveniles in custody were Aboriginal. ANTaR Qld believes that this means that the Qld government's proposed changes to the youth justice legislation will affect many Aboriginal youth. We think that the government's proposed boot camp approach is more likely to increase the criminalisation of young offenders rather than reduce it.

Research always shows that prisons are ineffective in rehabilitating offenders and preventing re-offending. Imprisonment is therefore a wasteful use of public money – and prisons are costly. Also studies indicate that youth detention is a pathway to adult offending as 30% of adult offenders were first incarcerated in the youth system.

The most effective approach to reduce offending and avoiding people being victims of youth crime would be to reduce the likelihood of a child or young person ever developing anti-social or offending behaviour patterns by early intervention and prevention strategies such as:

- supporting struggling families
- providing parents with support and parenting programs from the early years into adolescence
- supporting the development of good oral language and social skills
- responding more appropriately where young people are the victims of abuse and neglect.

For those already in the system, providing therapeutic support, developing life skills and receiving an education will be most effective.

The least effective approach is to put them into a youth detention centre:

*Detention acts as a corrupting influence on these children, many of whom go on to re-offend.*  
(NSW Attorney General, Greg Smith: 28 Feb 2013)

or a military style boot camp as these have been clearly shown to have no long term effects on repeat offending:

*The traditional boot camp for young offenders was arguably the least successful sentence in the Western world – it made them fitter, faster, but they were still burglars, just harder to catch.*  
(Judge Andrew Becroft, New Zealand, 2009)

With respect to youth crime ANtar Qld believes that there is no crime wave. In fact, the number of youth offenders has decreased over recent years. In 2011/12, only about 1.4% of the total population of 10-16 year old Queenslanders appeared in court for breaking the law. This was a 6.3% decrease in the number of juvenile defendants before the Magistrates Court.