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North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)
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Legal Affairs and Safety (LAS) Committee

By email: lasc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear LAS Committee,

Youth Justice and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 ('the Bill')

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Bill. NAAJA's submission responds to the proposed amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992 (Qld)*.

NAAJA has over 40 years' experience in providing justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Territory. Our Agency represents and assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children throughout the continuum of the Justice system.

NAAJA's key vision is to achieve True Justice, dignity and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. NAAJA has established specialist youth justice and child protection teams.

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people will disproportionately come into contact with the youth justice system. As a consequence, they are over charged and over-represented in the youth justice system.

The perpetuation of 'law and order' approaches to justice in the Northern Territory led to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. That Royal Commission exposed the scandalous treatment of children in youth detention and failings of NT. The Royal Commission recognised the need for integrated, sustained, well-funded and community-based responses to children and young people.

It follows that NAAJA is concerned that there is no provision in the amendments proposed by this Bill for support programs to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with their obligations regarding bail. These type of inadequate responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people results in their entrenchment in the criminal justice system.

NAAJA supports our colleagues at the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service and other Queensland partners and submits that this Bill will do nothing to address

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the root causes of youth crime in Queensland. The Bill's endorsement by the LAS Committee would set a dangerous precedent for the future of youth justice reform in Australia and for the future of our most vulnerable children and young people.

NAAJA calls for the LAS Committee to reject this Bill.

Sincerely



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