

# Amnesty International Townsville Action Group

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12 March 2021

To Legal Affairs and Safety Committee of the Queensland Parliament

[lasc@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:lasc@parliament.qld.gov.au)

## Submission opposing proposed changes to the Youth Justice Act (1999)

The Townsville Amnesty International Action Group has a mailing list of more than 400 supporters and an active core group of around 50 members.

We are very concerned by the proposed changes to the Act which are based on the central principle that the community “should be protected from serious recidivist offenders”. This clearly conflicts with the Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that any legislation affecting children must operate in the ‘best interests of the child’. Children involved in the youth justice system are some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children in our country.

The changes also ignore Queensland’s own Human Rights Act which clearly states that a child who has been convicted of an offence should be treated in a way that is appropriate for the child’s age.

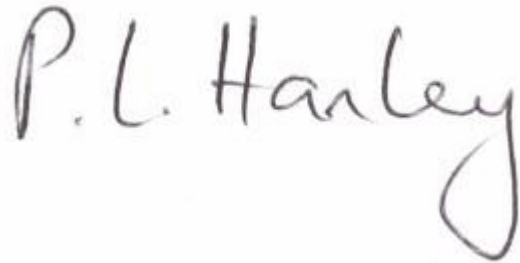
The objectives and principles in the Act should be about keeping children out of prison except as the very last resort, and to address the underlying causes of crime.

Several of the proposed changes involve strengthening bail laws. Past experience tells us that this will result in watch houses and prisons overflowing.

We believe that the government must fund Indigenous and community-led programs, including justice reinvestment sites, to keep children out of prison and to address underlying causes of crime.

We agree with Matt Gardiner, Save the Children’s Executive Director of Australian Services, who has said the Queensland Government needed to look at what actually works and to work collaboratively with young people instead of rushing through measures that won’t work.

It is very sad that some positive changes that have been made in the youth justice area in Queensland are now in danger of being reversed so the Government can be seen to be “tough on crime”.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "P.L. Hanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped 'y' at the end.

Peter Hanley [REDACTED]

Co - Convenor

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