

Your ref:

Our ref: [REDACTED]

OFFICIAL

24 November 2023

Ms S Bolton MP
Chair
Youth Justice Reform Select Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Bolton

Inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a written briefing on the progress of our *Diverting young offenders from crime* audit.

The objective of this audit is to assess whether youth justice strategies and programs are effective in reducing crime by serious repeat offenders and improving community safety. This audit focusses on serious repeat offenders, given the community safety concerns being raised in relation to this cohort. We are currently in the process of updating the title of this audit to better reflect its overall scope.

Our audit is still in the evidence gathering phase. Accordingly, we are not positioned to provide the committee with any preliminary findings or recommendations now. We anticipate tabling our final report on this audit in parliament in April 2024. Further information on the scope of this audit, and our progress, is included in the appendix to this letter.

I have nominated [REDACTED], Senior Manager – Parliamentary Services, to be the committee's point of contact for the inquiry. Please contact [REDACTED] if you have any questions or if you would like any further information.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General

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Written briefing by the Auditor-General

We commenced our performance audit on *Diverting young offenders from crime* in March 2023, and issued our audit strategy to the relevant entities in May 2023. The audit is currently in the conduct phase, where we gather evidence to inform the development of our findings and recommendations.

The objective of this audit is to assess whether youth justice strategies and programs are effective in reducing crime by serious repeat offenders and improving community safety. This audit focusses on serious repeat offenders, given the community safety concerns being raised in relation to this cohort. Serious repeat offenders are identified by the department based on offending frequency and the seriousness of alleged crimes.

The following sections provide additional information on the areas requested in your letter of 13 November 2023.

The entities, strategies and programs covered by the audit

Given the scope and focus of the audit, we are auditing the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training, Queensland Police Service, and the Department of Justice and Attorney General. These entities were identified as having the primary roles in developing and delivering strategies and programs targeting serious repeat offenders. We are also speaking to other entities who have a role in dealing with this cohort to provide additional information and context.

The audit is evaluating the key strategy, *Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019-23*, and action plans implemented by the government.

The primary programs and initiatives we are reviewing in this audit are:

- Emotional Regulation, Impulse Control (ERIC)
- Changing Habits and Reaching Targets (CHART)
- Intensive Case Management (ICM)
- On Country
- Youth Co-Responder Teams
- Multi-Agency Collaborative Panels (MACPs)
- 72-hour plans.

While we are considering how these programs and initiatives contribute to the reduction of crime by serious repeat offenders, we are not evaluating these programs.

Our audit will not conclude on the effectiveness of each of these programs. Instead, we will conclude on whether the overall strategies and programs put in place by the government are effective in reducing crime by this cohort. We will also assess how the responsible entities are evaluating the effectiveness of programs and initiatives.

Preliminary findings and/or anticipated recommendations

As previously mentioned, our audit is in the conduct (evidence gathering) phase. Our work is continuing and we are still in the process of completing our assessment and validating our observations. Accordingly, we are not able to provide any preliminary findings or recommendations to the committee at this stage.

As a matter of professional practice, and in accordance with the *Auditor-General Act 2009* (the Act), we need to validate our findings and provide procedural fairness to entities we audit. This involves conducting quality assurance activities over our audit work, findings, and conclusions, and in developing recommendations. We are also required to provide the audited entities the opportunity to comment on our findings and recommendations. In preparing our report to parliament, the Act requires us to provide key stakeholders with 21 days to comment on any matters of significance included in our proposed report.

Accordingly, it would be more appropriate for us to provide a detailed briefing to your committee once our final report is tabled in parliament. We remain focussed on having this work completed as a priority and will continue to work with the relevant entities to have this finalised as soon as practicable.

The anticipated tabling date for the audit

We anticipate that we will table the report in parliament in April 2024.

