

Telephone:

Reference:

Committee Secretariat
Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee

Via email:

Dear Committee Secretariat

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) acknowledges the government's aim to enhance community safety and hold young offenders accountable for serious offences, as proposed in the *Making Queensland Safer (Adult Crime, Adult Time) Amendment Bill* (the Bill).

The Bill's proposal to introduce adult sentences for 20 additional offences, particularly crimes such as rape, kidnapping, and trafficking in dangerous drugs, raises important questions of how the youth justice system will provide a rehabilitative focus for children sentenced to potentially lengthier periods of detention to improve long-term outcomes for the young person, and the community.

I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's consideration of the Bill.

A focus on rehabilitation and reintegration

When we, as a community, use our strongest tools to punish young people who commit offences, we also have a responsibility to help them.

Many of the new offences included in the Bill will increase custodial sentences in the vicinity of seven to 15 years¹, including, but not limited to offences such as using cars to endanger police (seven years maximum to 14 years maximum), rape (10 years maximum² to lifetime maximum) and attempted murder (10 years maximum to lifetime maximum³).

At the maximum end of its application, this proposed amendment will result in people re-entering the community in their early thirties, who have spent the majority of their life in Queensland's detention facilities.

Any time a child is deprived of their liberty in custodial detention must be productive, therapeutic, and intentionally constructive. Fundamentally, it must provide opportunity for the young person to continue their education, training, and interventions to address the environmental factors which contribute to risk of offending, and the behavioural drivers for

¹ Queensland Government (2025). *ACAT offences – penalties*. [ACAT offences.pdf](#)

² Unless courts considers particularly heinous – then life imprisonment

³ Unless courts considers particularly heinous – then life imprisonment

offending behaviour, and it should establish meaningful and sustainable support networks to promote long-term rehabilitation post-detention.

The current model does not adequately address the complexities of youth offending, and any extension of detention time must include tailored, rehabilitative interventions. Effective rehabilitation cannot be siloed within the detention system alone; it requires integrated services across education, mental health, therapy, and post-release support ensuring that young people are not only rehabilitated during their detention but are also equipped with the tools they need for successful reintegration into the community upon release.

Listening to young people

Young people have told us that they need specific, individualised, intensive, and holistic support over the long term.⁴ This support works best when provided by trusted workers who communicate effectively and are committed to not giving up on them.

The QFCC's 2024 report, *Exiting youth detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support* identified the pressures within the current detention system and the need for cross-portfolio engagement to rethink detention, re-designing a model of custody that is focused on rehabilitation and sets young people up to succeed post-release.⁵

Our approach to youth justice must be broader and more nuanced. It must address the root causes⁶ of offending in a child's life. This includes intensive, sustained programs working with families across various human service sectors. Until we do that, we will continue to treat detention as the solution to youth offending, despite the evidence showing it does not effectively keep the community safe or reduce reoffending.

When considered within the broad and diverse policy solutions that we could introduce, increasing sentences is a solution that applies after a crime has occurred and, other than a possible and slight deterrent factor, it does not do much to prevent the commission of a future crime.

⁴ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Exiting Youth Detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support*. [Exiting detention report 24 May 2024](#)

⁵ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Exiting Youth Detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support*. [Exiting detention report 24 May 2024](#)

⁶ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Addressing Root Causes snapshot*. [Youth Justice - Addressing the Root Causes - Snap Shot.pdf](#)



A consistent position

As the Principal Commissioner of the QFCC, I have consistently called for holistic, whole-of-government and cross portfolio approaches to youth justice as it relates to providing trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate responses to young people who engage in offending behaviours.

This is detailed in several reports and submissions recently published by the QFCC, including:

- *Exiting Youth Detention* Report⁷: We must hear from young people, their families, and youth justice workers in order to improve transitions from detention and reduce reoffending. Young people face interconnected issues, such as poverty, family instability, and mental health challenges, which contribute to their involvement in the justice system. A dedicated post-detention program and investment in preventative measures is imperative to break the cycle of youth offending.
- Submission to the *Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System*⁸: We must address the root causes of youth offending, such as social disadvantage and trauma. It is essential that we substitute the current punitive approach with a more holistic approach that focuses on rehabilitation, early intervention, and community-based strategies.
- Submission to the *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024*⁹: I emphasised that youth detention must be redesigned to be a place of rehabilitation, and any change to the youth justice system must be focused on clear whole-of-system outcomes. Further, I called for the alignment of consequences and the developmental and cognitive stages of young people to shape future behaviour.
- *Addressing Root Causes snapshot*¹⁰: The youth justice system needs strategic design with clear outcomes and accountability. Transparency, timely accountability for children, and evidence-based investment are essential. Families and communities should be involved in service delivery, and detention centres must focus on rehabilitation. Responses should consider children's developmental and cognitive needs, ensuring children feel valued, respected, and connected to their communities.

The QFCC supports community safety in its entirety. Holding young offenders accountable for their actions is a critical step in restoration, where these responses align with evidence-based practices prioritising rehabilitation, early intervention, and the unique developmental needs of young people.

⁷ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Exiting Youth Detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support. Exiting detention report 24 May 2024*

⁸ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System. QFCC Submission - Youth Justice and Incarceration - Federal - Oct 2024.pdf*

⁹ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024. Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024 0.pdf*

¹⁰ Queensland Family and Child Commission (2024). *Addressing Root Causes snapshot. Youth Justice - Addressing the Root Causes - Snap Shot.pdf*

A system that recognises the developmental differences between young offenders and adults, provides robust support for vulnerable children and their families, and invests in community-based alternatives to detention, will not only improve outcomes for young people but will contribute to long-term community safety.

I look forward to continuing the dialogue on how best to improve Queensland's youth justice system for the benefit of all Queenslanders. If you have any queries in relation to this matter, please don't hesitate to contact me directly on [REDACTED] or via email at [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

April 2025

