

MEDIA RELEASE

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



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QFCC backs state juvenile justice reforms

Leading state child protection authority Queensland Family and Commission (QFCC) has welcomed the latest juvenile justice reforms to treat 17 year-olds under Youth Justice laws.

The QFCC has consistently advocated for legislation and practice reform to remove 17 year olds from the adult corrections system and transition them to the youth justice system.

QFCC Principal Commissioner Cheryl Vardon said she applauded the move which will see reforms brought into line with legislation in all other Australian jurisdictions.

“I was pleased to see Minister Farmer’s recent announcement that from 12 February, Queensland will treat 17 year-olds under Youth Justice laws instead of as adults,” Ms Vardon said.

“This move recognises Queensland’s responsibilities under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and brings Queensland in line with all other Australian states and territories.

“It’s a renewed opportunity to work with these young people to address the causes of their offending behaviour.”

Ms Vardon said the changes were a step in the right direction to support children and young people in a trauma-responsive way.

“We need a different way of working with children and young people who come into contact, or are at risk of coming into contact, with the youth justice system,” she said.

“It’s important to consider what else might be happening in children’s lives and the impact of past experiences on their current actions. This is not to discount or excuse their actions but recognise the trauma many of these children and young people have experienced.

“Young offenders are a particularly vulnerable group and require a different response to that of adult offenders.”

Ms Vardon said it’s important for children and young people to have their rights respected and supported.

“The QFCC promotes the safety, wellbeing and human rights of children and young people and endorses the processes and reviews now in place by Youth Justice case workers to address transitional issues.”

The QFCC has consistently recommended these justice reforms in previous submissions to Parliamentary Committees and Queensland Government departments.

To further promote the rights of children and young people, the QFCC is continuing to advocate raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12 years of age to comply with the United Nations recommendation and stakeholder views. The QFCC released the Age of Criminal Responsibility in Queensland information paper last year.

Additionally the QFCC is also working with stakeholders to identify options for a youth detention oversight model to make sure human rights standards are upheld.

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