



Queensland
Family & Child
Commission

Telephone: 07 3900 6000
Reference: OoC – TF19/193 - D19/6949

Imprisonment and Recidivism Inquiry
Queensland Productivity Commission
PO Box 12112
GEORGE STREET QLD 4003

To Whom It May Concern

The Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) is pleased to provide a submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission regarding the draft report of the Inquiry into Imprisonment and Recidivism. This submission follows the QFCC's submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission in response to *September 2018 – Issues Paper: Imprisonment and Recidivism*.¹

The *Family and Child Commission Act 2014* establishes the QFCC to promote the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people. The Act provides the QFCC with the function of giving expert advice to relevant agencies about laws, policies, practices and services.

The QFCC provides the following information to inform Draft Recommendation 15(b): *'The Queensland Government should establish a trial program through schools to identify and better support at-risk children to prevent disengagement from the education system'*.

The recommendation supports Article 28 of the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* which provides that children and young people have a right to education and that States Parties are required to encourage regular attendance and reduce drop-out rates.

The QFCC supports schools to be the targeted universal service through which children and young people are engaged to prevent disengagement.

In 2018, the QFCC delivered the *Growing Up In Queensland* project, which engaged more than 7,000 children and young people between the ages of 4 and 18 to gather their views and experiences about growing up in Queensland. Children and young people reported that schools were a valued part of their community and that they feel close to their school community. They identified the school environment as a place where they should to be able to access support.

Young people told the QFCC that speaking to counsellors was a good strategy for seeking support to address issues in their lives. Some reported concerns about speaking to school guidance officers and counsellors in case they breached their privacy and confidentiality if they raised real concerns about events in their lives. However, many young people the QFCC spoke to did not know who their school counsellor or guidance officer was or how to access them.

¹ Queensland Family and Child Commission 2018, Submission No. IRIP-036 to the Queensland Productivity Commission, Imprisonment and Recidivism Inquiry, 30 October 2018.

The QFCC recommends the trial program leverages and integrates existing support systems embedded within schools, particularly counsellors and guidance officers. This will make sure children and young people are aware of, and better connected, with ongoing support.

In 2017, the QFCC delivered the report – *The age of criminal responsibility in Queensland*, which noted research indicating that children who come into the youth justice system prior to 15 years of age are then less likely to complete their school education, undertake further education or training, or gain employment.² This highlights the importance of implementing the trial program in detention centres to prevent this vulnerable cohort disengaging from education services on exiting detention.

The Queensland Government's *Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023*³ includes priorities to keep engaged, and re-engage, young people in education. These priorities ought to be considered in the design of any trial program.

The QFCC supports the Queensland Productivity Commission's Draft Recommendation 13 that: '*the Queensland Government should publish its Youth Justice Action Plan in response to the Report on Youth Justice...[and] should publicly report on recommendations and evaluation of programs*'.

If you or your officers have any queries in relation to this matter they may contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Cheryl Vardon
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

17/04/2019

² Queensland Family and Child Commission 2017, *The age of criminal responsibility in Queensland*, Queensland Government, viewed 2 April 2019, <https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/For%20professionals/policy/minimum-age-criminal-responsibility.pdf> (p. 29).

³ Queensland Government 2019, *Working Together: Changing the Story*, viewed 2 April 2019, <https://www.csyw.qld.gov.au/resources/dcsyw/youth-justice/youth-justice-report-strategy/strategy.pdf>