



Minister for Children and Youth Justice
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

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Our reference: CYJMA 02346-2022

1 William Street Brisbane 4000
Locked Bag 3405
Brisbane Queensland 4001 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3719 7330
Email cyjma@ministerial.qld.gov.au

21 JUL 2022

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
ClerksOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 3680-22 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 21 June 2022 titled 'Youth judicial system'.

I would like to assure the petitioners that community safety is a key priority of the Palaszczuk Government. All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe in their homes and communities.

More than \$750 million has been invested since 2017 to protect the community by reducing youth crime. This investment has delivered a new youth detention centre, additional staffing and extra beds in the existing centres, increasing from 212 beds to 306 since 2017, and a range of new and expanded intervention programs to reduce reoffending.

This includes an increase to funding in 2022–23 of \$78.8 million over four years to continue delivery of youth justice strategy reforms that aim to deliver evidence-based youth justice system that holds children accountable for their behaviour. This investment has helped divert children from offending and reoffending and has provided young people who offend with opportunities to turn their lives around and break the cycle of offending.

Last year, the Government announced additional initiatives to further address youth crime and focus on serious repeat offenders. This included legislative changes to strengthen how young people who offend are dealt with in the court system, such as:

- a presumption against bail for children who commit certain offences while on bail for a prescribed indictable offence (eg. driving a stolen vehicle, robbery);
- courts having the ability to consider whether parents, guardians and others are willing to support the child to comply with bail conditions before bail is granted;
- a new principle in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* that stresses the community must be protected from recidivist high-risk offenders; and
- legislating the requirement that in sentencing young people, courts consider whether offences were committed while on bail.

These laws are amongst the toughest in the country and are resulting in more serious repeat offenders being held in custody, and for longer. The average number of children in custody rose by over 30 the month after these laws were introduced. This was 70 more children than the same month in the previous year. By September 2021 there were 100 more young people in custody than in the same month the previous year.

In addition to these measures, the Government has also announced crime prevention initiatives such as: giving police powers to use metal detecting wands to target knife crime on the Gold Coast (two-year trial) and strengthening anti-hooning laws.

To support the initiatives put in place to protect our communities, the Government has also committed to deploying 2025 extra police, the largest investment in police in this State for decades.

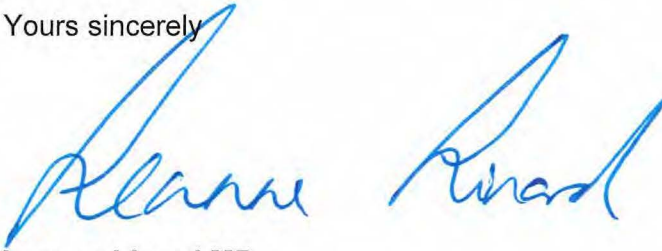
While the Government has a strong focus on keeping our communities safe, it is important to recognise there will always be young people who still break the law, despite the best efforts of the Government and all the help available. We will continue to hold these young people to account.

The Government will closely monitor trends in youth crime to make sure our approach to addressing serious repeat offending is effective. As part of this, a dedicated Youth Justice Taskforce has been established to oversee the reforms, led by Assistant Commissioner Cheryl Scanlon APM and Mr Michael Drane, Senior Executive Director, Youth Detention Operations and Reform.

To further ensure our investment is working, former Police Commissioner Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM has undertaken an independent review following six months of implementation of the reforms. Mr Atkinson's report is being considered by Government.

All Queenslanders have a right to feel safe in their homes and communities. We are committed to providing evidence-based interventions that work in reducing crime and keep young people who offend accountable.

Yours sincerely



Leanne Linard MP
Minister for Children and Youth Justice and
Minister for Multicultural Affairs