



Minister for Children and Youth Justice  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

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23 June 2022

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
[ClerksOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au](mailto:ClerksOffice@parliament.qld.gov.au)

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 3720-22 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 24 May 2022 titled 'Stronger Response to Juvenile Crime Sentencing in Queensland'.

Firstly, I would like to assure the people of Queensland that community safety continues to remain a top priority for the Queensland Government. That is why we have invested record funding to reduce youth crime.

Since 2017, over \$550 million has been invested in new youth detention centres, staffing, extra beds, and early intervention programs across the whole sector. An additional \$98.4 million has also been invested to deliver a balanced, evidence-based youth justice system that holds young people accountable for their behaviour.

This investment has been guided by *Working Together, Changing the Story, Queensland's Youth Justice Strategy for 2019-2023* (the strategy) which provides a framework for preventing and responding to youth crime. The strategy includes a range of responses to intervene early to support children and families before they become involved in offending, and to hold young people who offend accountable while providing them with support and guidance to change their behaviours and attitudes.

The strategy is proving to be effective for most young offenders, with the Queensland Government Statistician's Office recent report Crime Report Queensland 2020-21 finding that in 2020-21, there has been a 26.8 per cent reduction in the number of young offenders compared to 2011-12 (the report can be found at [www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/7856/crime-report-qld-2020-21.pdf](http://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/7856/crime-report-qld-2020-21.pdf)). However, there remains a small cohort who continue to engage in persistent and serious repeat offending, presenting a significant risk to the communities in which they live.

In February 2021, the Queensland Government announced additional initiatives to focus on the small percentage of serious repeat offenders who commit 44 per cent of the crimes. This included legislative amendments to strengthen how young offenders are dealt with in the court system, such as requiring serious repeat offenders to show cause when applying for bail, and a new principle in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* that stresses the community must be protected from repeat youth offenders.

Former Police Commissioner, Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM, has undertaken an independent review following six months of implementation of the reforms to ensure our investment is working. This report will be used to identify where more can be done to address youth reoffending.

The Palaszczuk Government does not support mandatory sentencing because it assumes that every offence under the same category is equally serious, and removes the courts' discretion, meaning a court is prohibited from considering relevant circumstances. This leads to perverse outcomes, such as the case involving Western Australia's three strikes law, in which a 12-year-old boy was sentenced to 12 months detention for entering a house in the company of others and taking a wallet containing \$4. His previous burglaries consisted of entering a laundry room in a hotel where nothing was removed, and a school canteen where a can of soft drink was taken.

However, children do receive harsher penalties depending on how serious their offending is. The *Youth Justice Act 1992* sets maximum detention periods, depending on the sentencing court and seriousness of the offence. A Childrens Court magistrate can usually impose detention of up to one year; more serious offences are dealt with in the higher courts, which can sentence a child to detention for a period up to and including the maximum of life, in appropriate circumstances.

While detention can be a necessary measure when there is an immediate risk to the community, the government also acknowledges that in Australia, 80 per cent of children and young people exiting detention reoffend and are back under Youth Justice supervision within 12 months.

That is why the government's youth justice investments referred to above include evidence-based programs such as Transition to Success (T2S), which helps young people lower their risk of offending by engaging with education, training and employment. The most recent evaluation of the program found that 67% of all T2S participants who completed a course did not offend or reoffend within 12 months of completion. These are real improvements in community safety.

The government regularly reviews legislation and associated policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure they are best practice and based on strong evidence to deliver the best outcomes for the community.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Toni Craig, Director, Youth Justice Policy, Strategy and Legislation, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs on 3097 7535.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



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