



Minister for Employment and Small Business  
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Our Ref: 03267/23  
Your Ref: A1165965

9 NOV 2023

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

Dear Mr Laurie 

Thank you for your letter on 12 October 2023 regarding Petition No. 3921-23 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 10 October 2023, regarding youth crime.

I would like to assure the petitioners that community safety continues to be a top priority for the Queensland Government, and we are grateful for the community taking the time to provide suggestions on how we could further improve safety and tackle the complex causes of youth crime. All Queenslanders have a right to feel safe in their homes and communities. This is why we have strengthened the youth justice legal framework as it relates to bail and invested more than a billion dollars since 2015 to protect the community by reducing youth crime.

Responses to specific points in the submission are included below, however, overall, the number of individual young people with a proven offences is declining in Queensland, down 35% in the last 10 years and 30% in the last five years. I understand that this is of little comfort to victims of youth crime and their families. Queensland has amongst the strongest youth justice laws in the country – and we are committed to ensuring that communities are kept safe and that offenders are held accountable.

In March 2023 the Parliament passed the *Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023*, which included tougher responses to youth crime, such as:

- introducing breach of a bail condition as an offence;
- extending the maximum term of a conditional release order from three to six months, allowing additional supervision and rehabilitative programs to be undertaken;
- stronger conditional release orders so that serious repeat offenders are more likely to serve out their detention when they breach a condition;
- empowering the court to declare certain young people as 'serious repeat offenders', so tougher sentencing principles to protect community safety must be applied;
- making it more difficult for serious repeat offenders to get bail by expanding the list of offences with a presumption against bail;
- harsher maximum penalties for unlawful use of a motor vehicle offences if the person is armed, uses violence or where the offending is published on social media;
- clarifying to police they do not need to consider alternatives to arrest if a young person is breaching, or likely to breach, a condition of their bail.

We agree that a focus on early intervention programs is crucial to breaking the destructive cycle of youth crime, and we're taking action and investing in programs to divert young people away from the criminal justice system. Programs include working with young people and their families, connecting to education and other services including mental health or drug and alcohol treatment services and providing support to First Nations young people.

Most recently the Government has invested \$267 million over four years into diversion and rehabilitation initiatives, including:

- \$29.4 million to continue the Community Youth Response and Diversion services;
- \$30 million investment in additional resources for Intensive Case Management;
- \$96.2 million for youth co-responder teams;
- \$56 million to Queensland Police Citizens Youth Clubs;
- \$4.1 million for On Country programs in Cairns, Mt Isa and Townsville;
- \$25.4 million on intensive bail support for young people and their families;
- \$5 million for Youth Justice Reinvestment;
- \$4.7 million for the Jonathon Thurston Academy *YouGotThis* Program;
- \$4.2 million for the Townsville Street University;
- \$2 million for Big Bounce Initiative; and
- \$1.8 million to extend Early Action Groups to Mt Isa and Cairns.

The expansion of the Intensive Case Management program is a key example of the Government's commitment to early intervention. The program is a highly attentive model of case management, working with young people and their families to address the multiple causes of offending, to help break the cycle of crime. A recent evaluation of the Intensive Case Management program is showing positive results, with a 51 per cent reduction in offending frequency, 72 per cent reduction in proportion of crimes against the person, and improved family functioning.

The *Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023* also enshrined into legislation Multi-Agency Collaborative Panels, which involve Youth Justice, Queensland Police Service, Child Safety, Queensland Health and Education, plus relevant non-government organisations, working together to coordinate service delivery and address systemic barriers that contribute to high-risk young people's offending behaviour, including young people engaged in serious repeat offending. This initiative is active in 17 locations around the State.

The Government is also investing in new and innovative programs via the Community Partnership Innovation Grants, plus Community Based Crime Action Committees that have been funded \$15 million, including \$9 million specifically for victims of property crime.

In relation to requests in the petition, when a court hands down a sentence, the young person's need for rehabilitation is a key consideration. For example, if the child is sentenced to a supervised order or detention order, they are usually required to participate in rehabilitation programs. The evidence tells us that the level of rehabilitation programs offered to children need to respond to their risk of re-offending and should focus on their individual needs. We know that most children that commit offences, do not re-offend once they are offered diversionary and support services.

In relation to mandated electronic monitoring devices as part of a condition for sentencing without a young person's consent, while existing provisions (*Youth Justice Act 1992* section 52AA) do not require the child's consent, if the child does not consent to bail conditions, they will remain in custody. Mandated sentencing involving electronic monitoring devices are not practical, because active participation of the child is needed to ensure the device is charged. If a child does not consent, they likely won't charge the device, be breached and return to custody.



The principle of 'detention as a last resort', as highlighted in the petition, is present in all States and Territories in Australia and is a long-standing principle that is consistent with international law and treaties. However, detention as a last resort does not mean that young people are not being detained in custody when the court deems it appropriate. In fact, young people in Queensland are spending longer periods of time in custody, compared with the national rate.

To prevent offending and re-offending, we will continue to identify and implement effective long-term strategies to implement what the evidence tells us will deliver community safety, as well as take measures necessary in the short term to respond to dynamic changes in youth crime.

The Queensland Government's principles and obligation is openness and transparency, including sharing program evaluation findings. You may be interested in reviewing the annual youth justice data published in a number of places, including in the Childrens Court and Magistrates Court Annual reports, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Youth Justice in Australia, and the Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services.

The Queensland Government has listened to victims of crimes and have announced a new Independent Ministerial Advisory Council (IMAC) which will make sure that the needs of victims of crime are heard. The IMAC will play an important role in shaping the government's response to victims of crime and the membership of IMAC will be from a diverse range of backgrounds. Along with the IMAC in September the interim Victims Commissioner was appointed to assist victims of crime to ensure that the voices of victims are heard and that enduring changes can be made to meet the needs of victims.

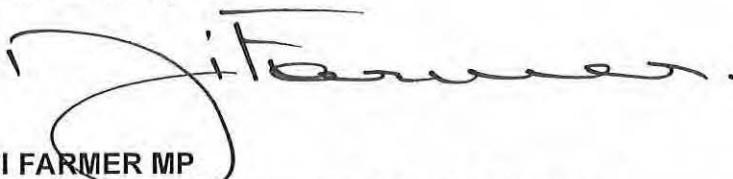
Youth Justice are currently evaluating youth justice programs, to help us better understand not only 'what works' but what works for who, where and why. If these evaluations demonstrate that a program is not as effective as anticipated, we will stop it.

Youth Justice services are also subject to significant independent oversight, including the Queensland Family and Child Commission; Queensland Ombudsman's Inspector of Detention Services; the Public Guardian; Community Visitors; the Crime and Corruption Commission, the Queensland Human Rights Commission and the broader legal system. The independent Queensland Audit Office (QAO) is also conducting a comprehensive audit, *Diverting Young Offenders from Crime*, with a focus on programs and services delivered to high risk and serious repeat offenders. We will continue to support the QAO and will share our evaluation findings to ensure programs and services are as effective as they can be.

Youth crime is a complex issue that requires ongoing monitoring, and adjustment to our strategies and legislation in line with what the evidence tells us. Although there is no one solution to solve youth offending, the Queensland Government is committed to delivering initiatives aimed at strengthening prevention, early intervention, and rehabilitation responses to youth crime, with public safety and community confidence as the forefront.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising this matter with me, and I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



**DI FARMER MP**  
**Minister for Employment and Small Business**  
**Minister for Training and Skills Development**  
**Minister for Youth Justice**