



Minister for Children and Youth Justice Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Our reference: CYJMA 00612-2022

24 MAR 2022

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

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

Dear Mr Laurie

I refer to petition 3643-21 tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 22 February 2022 titled 'Queensland's youth justice system is failing our children and our community'.

I would like to assure the petitioners that the Queensland Government prioritises community safety. All Queenslanders have the right to feel safe in their homes and communities and more than half a billion dollars has been invested since 2017 to protect the community by reducing youth crime. This investment has delivered a new youth detention centre and extra beds in the existing centres (with total capacity increasing from 212 beds to 306 since 2017) and a range of new and expanded intervention programs to reduce reoffending.

In addition, a further \$98.4 million has been invested to deliver a balanced, 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 offenders with opportunities to turn their lives around and change their stories.

Programs and services being delivered on the Gold Coast include:

- *Integrated case management* – specialised case managers work with small caseloads of high-risk young offenders and their families to reduce offending, promote community safety, support reintegration into the community and hold people responsible for their actions.
- *Transition to Success (T2S)* – a vocational training and therapeutic service model is used to deliver programs in the community to young people aged 15 years and older who are involved with, or at risk of entering, the youth justice system.
- *Restorative Justice Conferencing* – a justice process that acknowledges the impacts and consequences of crime for victims and the community; requires the child to take responsibility for their actions; and repairs the harm caused to the victim.
- *Co-responder team* – a 24/7 strike team of police and youth workers diverting at-risk children after hours.
- *Community Youth Response and Diversion* – a place-based, multi-faceted approach that can include after-hours diversion and support, cultural mentoring, bridging education and family-focused case management for children aged 10-15 years old at risk of offending or reoffending.
- *Specialist Indigenous Youth and Family Workers* – provide intensive support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait families who have children at risk of entering, or already in contact with, the youth justice system.
- *Specialist Multi-Agency Response Team* – brings together specialists from partner agencies, including health, education and child safety, and cultural representatives. These multi-agency specialists assess and respond to children's needs and factors that may contribute to their offending.

The Queensland Government also ensures all children in youth detention are provided with appropriate rehabilitation measures. A detention centre caseworker works with each child and other stakeholders to actively plan educational and vocational learning and other tailored interventions for the child's rehabilitation and transition into the community, including:

- behavioural change programs focussed on key issues, including domestic and family violence, emotional regulation, aggression replacement, restorative practice and gender responsivity;
- interventions to address issues such as speech, language and hearing needs, mental health needs, and trauma relating to neglect and abuse; and
- cultural programs.

We are seeing the impact of this record investment, with the Queensland Government Statistician's Office's *Crime Report Queensland 2019-20* (the most recent available) finding there has been a 27.3 per cent reduction in the number of young offenders compared to 2010–11¹.

However, a small cohort of children are resistant to these interventions and commit a disproportionate number of offences, often placing themselves and the community at risk.

To respond to this, last year the Queensland Government announced additional initiatives to focus on serious repeat youth offenders. This included the following legislative amendments, which were subsequently passed by Parliament:

- a presumption against bail for children who commit further serious offences whilst already on bail for an indictable offence;
- courts having the ability to consider whether parents, guardians or others can provide assurances before a child is released on bail;
- a new principle in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* that stresses the community must be protected from repeat youth offenders;
- clear direction to courts that the fact a child offended while they were on bail is to lead to them being given a tougher sentence; and
- new police powers to use metal detecting wands to target knife crime (being trialled on the Gold Coast).

The Queensland Government also established a Youth Justice Taskforce (the Taskforce) to oversee the reforms.

On 20 October 2021, the government further announced the Taskforce would undertake a new strategy to case manage every serious, repeat young offender in Queensland. This involves rigorous intensive multi-agency case management, with relevant government agencies coming together to address issues that contribute to reoffending, including education, employment, health, accommodation and family supervision, to support long-term, meaningful change for the young people.

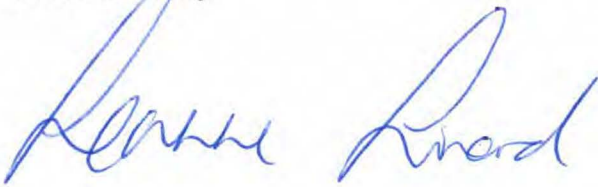
All this investment is supported by the *Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019-2023*. This strategy provides a framework for preventing and responding to youth crime using a balanced approach to intervene early; divert children away from court and custody, except where necessary to protect community safety; and prevent reoffending. These principles were recommended by former Police Commissioner, Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM in his 2018 *Report on Youth Justice*.

To further ensure our investment is working, Mr Atkinson has been commissioned to independently review the first six months of last year's reform implementation. The review is well underway.

¹ <https://www.qgso.qld.gov.au/issues/7856/crime-report-qld-2019-20.pdf>

Finally, I reiterate that all Queenslanders have a right to feel safe in their homes and communities, and the Queensland Government is committed to providing evidence-based interventions that work to reduce crime and keep offenders accountable.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Leanne Linard', is written in a cursive style.

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