



Minister for Education and
Minister for Youth Justice

1 William Street Brisbane Q 4000
PO Box 15033 City East Q 4002
Telephone +61 7 3719 7110
Email educationandyouthjustice@ministerial.qld.gov.au

Dept ref: 03940-2024
MO ref: MYJ418
Your ref: 4033-24

Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
Email: clerksoffice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter dated 23 August 2024 regarding Petition No. 4033-24 received by the Legislative Assembly on 20 August 2024, regarding *Vyleen's Law – it's time to end the youth crime crisis* which is aimed at addressing serious and violent repeat offenders.

I would like to assure the petitioners that community safety continues to be paramount for the Queensland Government, and we remain committed to keeping Queenslanders safe. We have made significant investment in targeting serious repeat offenders, tackling the complex causes of youth crime, boosting police resources and supporting victims. This investment is making a difference. Since 2019, there has been a 20% reduction in the number of young people committing offences, and a decline in number of serious repeat offenders by 20% between October 2023 and August 2024.

Legislative amendments introduced in March 2023, as part of the *Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023*, granted judges and magistrates the authority to impose stricter sentences on serious repeat offenders, with community safety a paramount sentencing consideration. The strengthened laws also included increased maximum penalties for unlawful use of a motor vehicle and related offences, introduced a new offence of breaching a bail condition, and required courts to consider a child's bail history when sentencing.

Children receive harsher penalties when their offending is more serious. More serious offences are dealt with in the higher courts, which can sentence a child for longer periods, including up to life imprisonment. Sentencing guidelines in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* make it clear that young people who commit offences should be held accountable and the community should be kept safe particularly in respect of recidivist high-risk offenders.

Additional legislative amendments were passed in August 2024 as part of the *Queensland Community Safety Act 2024*, to further enhance community safety and support the efforts of police to protect the community. These included:

- Expanding the eligibility criteria for the electronic monitoring trial;
- Clarifying the bail decision-making process;
- Expanding Jack's Law (scanning for knife possession in public places);
- Addressing the posting and boasting of offences on social media;
- Strengthening hooning laws;
- Creating new offences for ramming emergency vehicles;
- Rewording the principle of 'detention as a last resort' to state a child should be detained in custody, where necessary, including to ensure community safety, where other non-custodial measures of prevention and intervention would not be sufficient, and for no longer than necessary to meet the purpose of detention; and

- Allowing Childrens Court criminal proceedings to be more open to victims, family members of deceased victims, victims' representatives, and the media.

The petition requested a review of bail conditions for serious repeat offenders, to ensure they are appropriate and effective in preventing reoffending. Bail conditions are a matter for the courts, and the Government has ensured that the legislation makes all options available to courts, including the strictest possible conditions such as a 24-hour curfew and participating in a structured program of daily rehabilitative and pro-social programs and activities. The Department of Youth Justice provides and funds a range of programs and services across the state to ensure young people and their families have the support they need to comply with their bail conditions.

If either the prosecution or the defence are of the view that bail conditions are not appropriate and effective, they can seek a variation of bail, or appeal to a higher court. The Queensland Police Service has a team of dedicated youth justice prosecutors whose responsibilities include bringing applications for bail decisions to be reviewed.

Since 2021, Queensland has been trialling electronic monitoring (EM) as a condition of bail for children in certain circumstances, with the eligibility criteria targeting serious repeat offenders. The recently expanded eligibility criteria means EM is now an option for young people charged with a greater range of offences involving violence or threats of violence. Courts can now also include EM as a condition of bail for young people charged with a prescribed indictable offence in the preceding 12 months, even if they have not previously been found guilty of an offence.

On 28 June 2024, the Queensland Government released a four-year strategy to reduce offending by young people, keep the Queensland community safe, and ensure fewer victims of crime. A *Safer Queensland - Queensland Youth Justice Strategy 2024-2028* (the Strategy) outlines the Government's commitment to tackle the root causes of crime and support community safety. The strategy aligns with evidence and research, recommendations from the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee Interim Report and the Queensland Audit Office report *Reducing serious youth crime*. Along with the *Community Safety Plan for Queensland* and *Putting Queensland Kids First*, the strategy provides a comprehensive approach to prevent, intervene early, detain young people when necessary and supporting victims. It is further supported by the Department of Education's \$288 million *Youth Engagement Reform Package* and Queensland Health's \$1.645 billion *Better Care Together Plan for Queensland's state-funded mental health, alcohol and other drug services to 2027*.

The Queensland Government is also continuing to invest in evidence-informed youth justice responses such as:

- *Multi-agency Collaborative Panels*, involving Youth Justice, Queensland Police Service, Child Safety, Queensland Health and Education, plus relevant non-government organisations who work together to coordinate service delivery and address systemic barriers that contribute to high-risk young people's offending, including young people engaged in serious repeat offending. This initiative is available in 17 locations around the State.
- *Intensive Case Management* – a highly attentive model of case management, working with young people and their families to address the multiple causes of offending and deliver appropriate programs and interventions.
- *Early Action Groups* in Townsville, Mt Isa and Cairns providing multi-agency responses that intervene early to support young people at risk of entering the justice system and their families.
- *Ted Noffs Street University*, which provide holistic services for young people aged 12-25 years to engage in vocational and educational workshops, substance use treatment, life skills and mentoring.
- The Johnathan Thurston Academy's *JTYouGotThis* program, which engages young people at risk of becoming engaged in the youth justice system in a 10-week program focusing on goal setting, mentoring, cultural engagement and post-program support.

I note the petition calls for a national approach to youth crime intervention and prevention. While there may be benefit in creating a nationally consistent approach in addressing the root causes of youth crime, there is also significant benefit in maintaining localised approaches to supporting

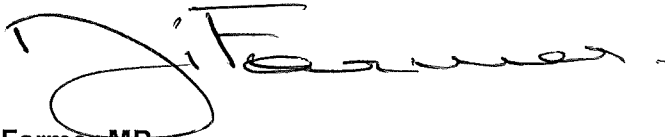
children, young people and their families. Local communities play a key role in preventing youth crime and are critical in supporting and encouraging young people to thrive and safely transition to adulthood. The Queensland Government is proactive in its approach to understand issues specific to a local area and how communities would like to act to reduce youth offending in their area. This includes knowing what concerns communities the most, supporting local responses that are already working, and encouraging new ideas to reduce youth offending and keep the community safe. The Queensland Government continues to invest in placed-based initiatives, such as:

- Intensive Bail Initiative
- Family-led decision making
- Project Booyah
- Youth-Co Responder Teams
- Early Actions Groups
- On Country programs
- Youth Crime Prevention Grants that provide funding for community-designed and led projects aimed at preventing and reducing crime.

Unfortunately, despite the best intentions of Government and numerous supports available, some young people will continue to break the law. We know there is no quick fix and there is always more work to be done. We will continue to hold young people accountable, including by strengthening laws to detain young people when required to keep the community safe, while also diverting young people away from crime through evidence-based programs and services.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Di Farmer', with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

Di Farmer MP
Minister for Education and
Minister for Youth Justice