

6 March 2025

Expert Legal Panel
expertpanels@youthjustice.qld.gov.au

Dear Expert Legal Panel,

Potential inclusion of additional offences – ‘adult crime, adult time’

This submission is from Save the Children and 54 reasons. Save the Children is a global non-government organisation that exists to uphold children’s rights. 54 reasons is our Australian delivery arm.¹ In Queensland, we provide youth justice early intervention, outreach and post-detention programs, as well as domestic, family and sexual violence and victim support services. These are part of our broader suite of rights-respecting services across the state – and nationally – for children, young people, families and communities, including victims of crime.

As outlined in our [submission](#)² to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee of Parliament about the Making Queensland Safer Bill 2024, enacting ‘adult crime, adult time’:

- will not be effective in reducing offending or reoffending by children and young people, and is not evidence-based;
- will make the community less safe, by subjecting children and young people to increased levels of punitive responses and incarceration, which will in turn cause reoffending and other social harms to become more likely;
- will cause significant harm, by exposing more children and young people to the retraumatising effects of the criminal justice system and imprisonment, further entrenching disadvantage and harming them and their communities; and
- significantly infringes children’s fundamental rights and undermines the integrity of the human rights-based framework that underpins the operation of the law and the legal system in Queensland, without adequate justification.

We strongly oppose including any additional offences as part of ‘adult crime, adult time’.

Based on our experience providing services across Queensland, our view is that including additional offences would:

1. *Exacerbate the undesirable and harmful consequences of the existing ‘adult crime, adult time’ offences and provisions, as summarised above. The further these extraordinary provisions are extended, the more corrosive they will be to the effectiveness of the youth justice system and the principles of human rights at the foundations of our legal and justice system.*

¹ We define a ‘child’ as a person up to the age of 18, reflecting the definition of a child in the CRC. In this letter, references to ‘children’ or ‘children and young people’ mean people aged up to 18.

² Available at <https://www.savethechildren.org.au/getmedia/3a75fb7b-c60e-47bd-876a-02e07dd587dc/2024-12-03-save-the-children-and-54-reasons-submission-making-queensland-safer-bill-2024.pdf.aspx>.



2. *Significantly increase pressure on the justice and prison system.* The system is already straining, and children are regularly being held in unsuitable detention facilities including adult watch houses. Imprisoning more children and young people would make this worse.
3. *Place significant pressure on other social services* – those that exist to support young people and their families, and more broadly. When children and young people are criminalised and imprisoned, the immediate and downstream impacts and costs are enormous – both on a human level, and fiscally through increased reliance on other social services including health, disability, employment, homelessness and welfare services.³
4. *Create an increased need for integrated throughcare and post-detention services* for young people. These services are critical to preventing reoffending and swift returns to detention.⁴

There is already a service gap in the existing system, with these services not consistently available to all children and young people who would benefit from them. Many children and young people are released from detention without any meaningful planning having been done to support their release, without a meaningful connection to a trusted adult who has worked with them while in detention, and without access to effective and evidence-informed post-detention services.⁵ In these circumstances, it is sadly unsurprising that many struggle to re-connect in positive ways with their community or to engage with education and/or employment.

Including additional offences and thereby increasing the numbers of children and young people in detention would exacerbate the existing service gap. Avoiding this would require a large increase in government investment to ensure that integrated throughcare and post-detention services are consistently available to meet the increased need that would result.

Thank you for inviting our views on these important matters. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at howard.choo@54reasons.org.au or on 0401 841 749 for any further information.

Yours sincerely,

Howard Choo
Head of Policy and Advocacy
54 reasons

³ See, eg, CoLab et al, 2019, *How Australia can invest in children and return more: A new look at the \$15bn cost of late action.*

⁴ See, eg, Save the Children and 54 reasons, 2023, *Putting children first: A rights respecting approach to youth justice in Australia*, pp 7 & 58.

⁵ See, eg, Queensland Family and Child Commission, 2024, *Exiting youth detention: Preventing crime by improving post-release support.*