

Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform in Queensland

yourtown's advocacy submission 2024



What is it about?

The Queensland Legislative Assembly has established the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims. In our submission, **yourtown** provides feedback on the priority areas that the Select Committee has endorsed for Phase 2 of the Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform in Queensland.

Why is it important?

The current youth justice system is not working and must change. We need to think differently about how to address the complex problems of youth crime. The only way to change the trajectory of people at risk of contact with the justice system, is by ensuring that the right support is provided to them at the right time. Importantly, the best time is long before potential contact with police or the justice system.

Some of **yourtown's** key messages:

1. Include the voices of young people in the youth justice strategy

yourtown appreciates that the priority area of a 10-year youth justice strategy aims to engage all government agencies and community organisations in the youth justice ecosystem; however, the priority area fails to mention the need for the voices of children and young people to inform the strategy. The Government should undertake human-centred and co-design processes to meaningfully capture and use the experiences and views of young people and stakeholders to inform the strategy.

2. Prioritise early intervention and prevention programs to support children and young people and make communities safer

yourtown strongly supports a priority area exploring how to instigate earlier assessment, intervention and prevention strategies that support children and families to access health, education, housing, and other services. We advocate for: tailoring solutions to specific vulnerable groups; prioritising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions; providing support to reduce disengagement from the education system; developing a trauma responsive system; delivering therapeutic early intervention programs; funding community-based programs; and building an evidence base of what works.

3. Improve children and young people's engagement with positive programs

Programs should be co-designed with potential participants so that the design results in a program that young people will happily engage with.

4. Improve children and young people's transition back into the community

Effective rehabilitation programs have the following elements: youth specialisation; formal partnerships between government and community organisations; culturally appropriate support; effective information sharing using secure systems; time to build trust and rapport; integrated care pre and post release; holistic service provision; individual support and group workshops; intensive case management; and practical strategies. In addition, meaningful employment reduces the risk of reoffending. Transitional employment programs can provide this cohort with critical factors, such as: self-esteem; a sense of responsibility; improved self-control and agency; structure and daily routines in their lives; and a source of income.

5. Develop media guidelines for the responsible reporting of crime

The media often simplifies the complex social narrative surrounding youth offending. Guidelines have been developed for the responsible reporting of suicide prevention and mental health. The same principles of reporting facts and sources of support could be beneficial for families and community members who are unsure of where to find support for children who are at risk of offending behaviour.



READ YOURTOWN'S FULL SUBMISSION

