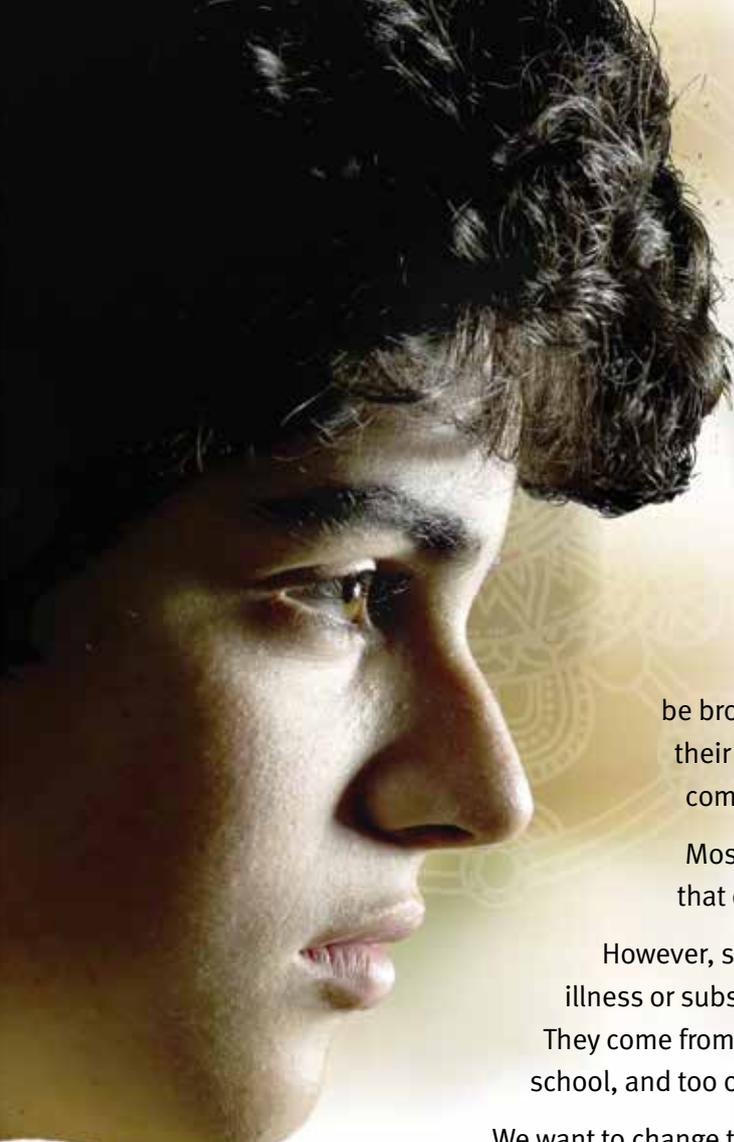




WORKING TOGETHER CHANGING THE STORY

Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023



Changing the story

All Queenslanders deserve to be safe in their homes, workplaces and communities.

We expect children and young people to be law abiding and respectful. If they are not, we expect them to be accountable and put things right.

Queenslanders also want children and young people to be brought up safe and well in their families so they can realise their capabilities and aspirations, and contribute as strong community members themselves.

Most children and young people don't commit crime, and most that do grow out of it.

However, some children and young people may suffer from mental illness or substance abuse. Some become chronic or serious offenders. They come from tough backgrounds. They usually do not graduate from school, and too often transition into prison.

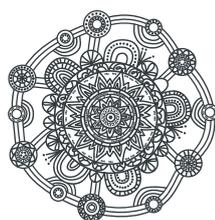
We want to change that story for our communities and our children and young people. That means working differently to do more of the things that address youth crime and keep our communities safe.

Many people are interested to know more about what is happening and what is being done. Many people want to get involved in or support community initiatives that help children and families turn young lives around.

If we are alert and respond well to the opportunities to intervene, from an early age right through to the transition to adulthood, together we can change the story.

Change will require collaboration and a focused effort.

While there are already lots of positive things happening that we can build on, the Youth Justice Strategy signals our further effort to deliver **real change, safer communities and positive futures** for all Queenslanders.



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander motif *Queenslanders Safe and Thriving in Culture, Families and Communities* featured in this publication is a piece of storytelling artwork created by Gilimbaa artist, Jenna Lee (Larrakia). This artwork symbolises that the cultural identity, diversity and richness of first nation's peoples is central to the decisions the department makes with regard to children, families and communities to ensure all Queenslanders are safe and thriving. You can read more about the artwork at our website www.csyw.qld.gov.au

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From the Premier and Minister

The Queensland Government is committed to keeping communities safe for all Queenslanders. That's why it is one of our top six priorities.

Under Our *Future State* commitments, we have set targets to reduce youth offending and reduce crime victimisation. We are determined to change the story for communities and for children and young offenders themselves when it comes to youth crime.

The Government is reforming the youth justice system — to do more of what we know works. Since 2015, we have commenced this change, including bringing back restorative justice conferencing, bringing 17 year olds into the youth justice system and seeking an independent review of youth justice by Mr Bob Atkinson AO APM.

In June 2018, Mr Atkinson delivered his *Report on Youth Justice*. He recommended the Government adopt four objectives — which he called the 'four pillars' — as its policy position on youth justice. These are:

- Intervene early
- Keep children out of court
- Keep children out of custody
- Reduce re-offending

He also said these should be 'framed or bookended by two fundamental principles — that public safety is paramount and that community confidence is essential'. We agree. His report comprehensively reviewed progress and evidence, and made 77 recommendations.

On receiving Mr Atkinson's report, we committed to develop a comprehensive and long-term Youth Justice Strategy to better prevent and respond to youth crime, consulting with the community and establishing a Youth Justice Strategy Reference Group of eminent experts to guide us. We have done so across the state over recent months, and thank the many Queenslanders who have participated.



Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
Premier of Queensland
and Minister for Trade

We have accepted or accepted in principle most of Mr Atkinson's recommendations and developed this Youth Justice Strategy based on the four objectives or pillars. Some require further consideration or work at a national level.

We have also recently received and are responding to the report of Community Champion retired Major General Stuart Smith on youth development and youth crime in Townsville.

Our next step is to develop a detailed Action Plan that sets out the practical steps to implement the Strategy and the responses to these reports.

Children and young people who offend need to be accountable and need to be guided to change their behaviours and attitudes. Many children and young people are successfully diverted from the criminal justice system, but for too long, governments have relied on custodial approaches to address young offending. For some this is necessary. But for most it hasn't worked. It's time to change the story.

To reduce youth offending, re-offending and remand levels, and to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, we need to tackle the causes and the consequences of youth crime. We need to get all agencies and sectors working together with children and young people.

We need to work with families and communities, engaging them as part of the solution. This includes empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to prevent and deal with crime in their communities and to help design effective community-led initiatives to address youth justice issues. We need to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of justice and other responses.

We look forward to working with you to change the story for our communities and our children and young people.



Di Farmer MP
Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women
Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Where are we **now?**

Members of the community who have been victims of offending by children and young people know how distressing and disruptive it is.

Young offenders are often also victims of crime and we know they want to live in safe communities themselves.

While only small numbers of children and young people commit offences, this does not detract from the impact this has on Queenslanders of all ages.

The historical approach to youth crime has been to treat children and young people in the same manner as adults — by responding to crimes with harsher penalties leading to incarceration, rather than addressing the causes of offending behaviour.

We know now that this is not the best way to reduce youth offending or re-offending, that it is not the best way to keep communities safe.

Evidence from our own successes in Queensland, particularly in recent years, as well as success in reducing youth offending and re-offending in other Australian and international jurisdictions, shows we need to take a different approach and do what works to change the behaviour of young offenders.

This evidence of practice is supported by developments in neuro-science that clearly indicate there are things we can do to prevent youth offending and redirect young offenders back into positive participation in their communities. This includes helping young offenders to understand the consequences of their offending by bringing them face to face with their victims. It also includes working with young offenders to address the other problems in their lives that lead to offending behaviour. For many children and young people these other factors are a product of their environment and they need help to overcome them.

We want to change the approach taken over the last three decades. We want the focus to be on community safety and stopping offending behaviour, not just locking up children and young people.

What the data tells us about youth offending

Only 1% of the 490,111 children and young people aged 10–17 in Queensland in 2017–18 had a proven offence.^a In fact, over the last decade the number of children and young people coming to police attention has significantly reduced from 12,135 children and young people in 2008–09 down to 9,409 children and young people in 2017–18, a reduction of 22%.^b However, too many children and young people are repeat offenders, with 10% of young offenders accounting for 44% of youth crime.^a

In 2017-18, there were 4,017 distinct children and young people with a proven offence.^a

Types of offences:^a

- Property Offences 63%
- Violent Offences 6%
- Traffic Offences 6%
- Drug Offences 5%
- Resist Police 5%
- Public Order 5%
- Other Offences 10%

74% of these children and young people with a proven offence were charged again within 12 months.^c

The Queensland Government has set a target of reducing re-offending by children and young people aged 10-15 by 5% by 2021-22.

“As someone who’s been the victim of crime on more than one occasion, my natural instinct was to want the young people responsible to be locked up. But the more I think about it, what I really want is for them not to commit the same crime against me or anyone else again. If locking them up doesn’t work, then we need to do whatever does work.”

Victim of offending by a young person

What happens to young offenders

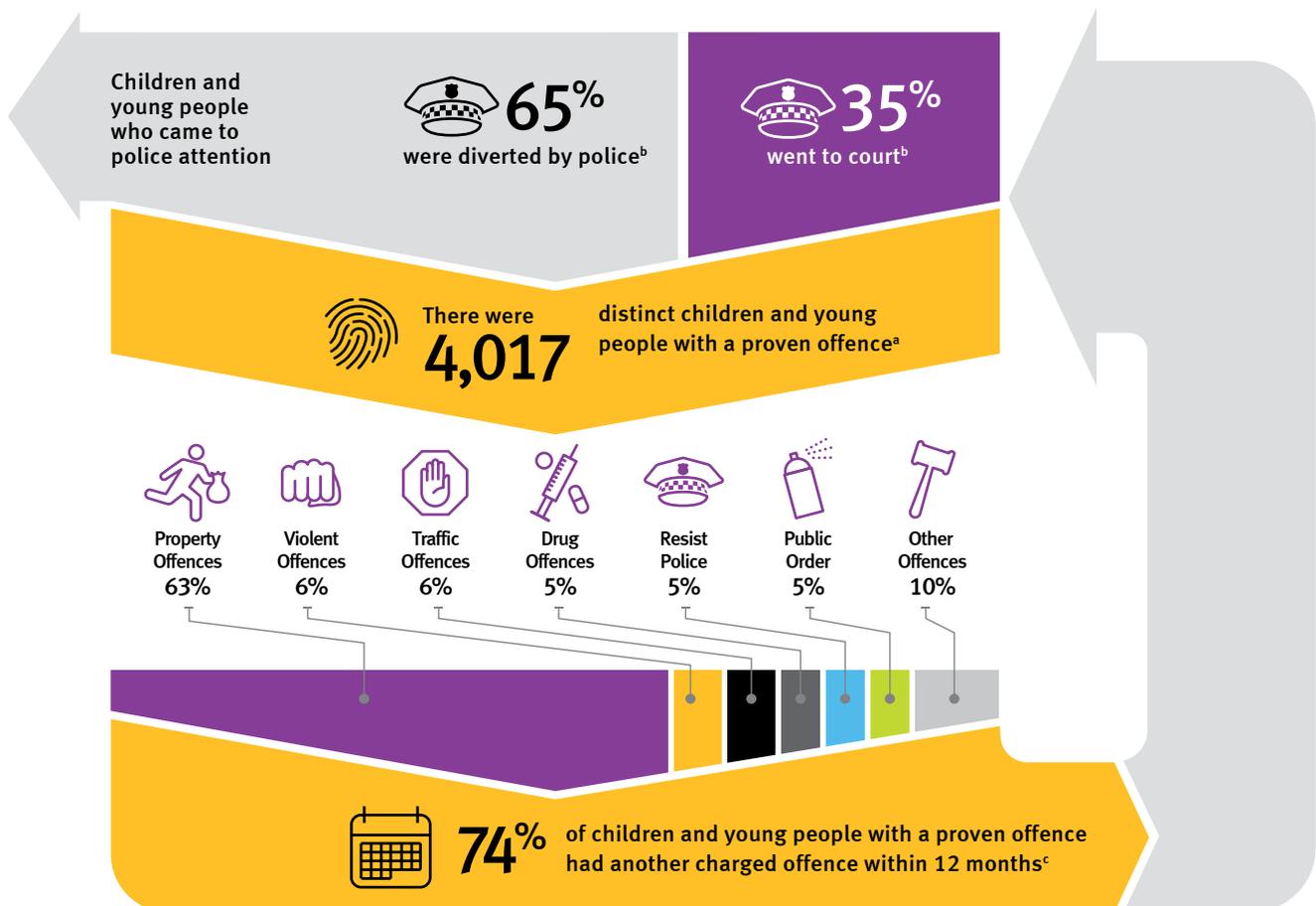
The Youth Justice system works to make sure young offenders are accountable for their actions and to help them not reoffend.

Police are able to divert a large number of children and young people away from the justice system. In 2017–18 police issued 4,899 cautions and diverted a total 6,079 young people away from court.^b Also, recent changes mean police are now diverting 15% more 17 year olds from the criminal justice system.^b

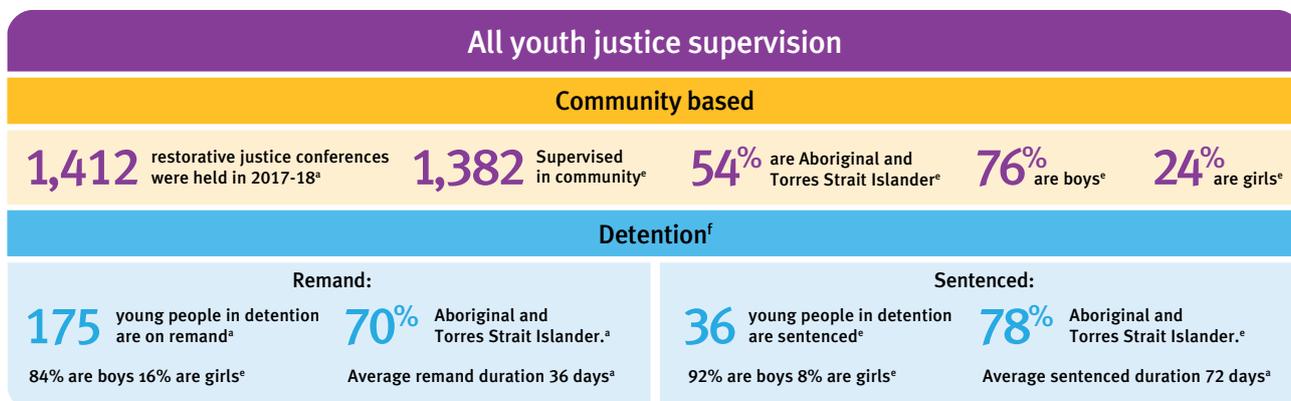
In fact, the majority of children and young people found to have committed offences are diverted by police, referred for a restorative justice conference

or sentenced to a community based penalty. This means they are supervised by a youth worker to meet the conditions of their penalty, such as doing community service, complying with a curfew, undertaking programs or making amends for the damage they have caused.

There are two Youth Detention Centres in Queensland that hold a small number of children and young people who are sentenced to a custodial penalty, and a much larger number of young people remanded (bail refused but not sentenced). In 2016–17 about 86% of those in Queensland detention were on remand, well above the national average of 61%.^d



On an average day in Queensland, Youth Justice staff supervise the following:



Profile of children and young people in Youth Justice

The children and young people who come into the Youth Justice system generally come from tough and often traumatic family backgrounds, and many have issues and problems that affect their behaviours, lifestyles and decisions.

- 31% have a parent that has been held in adult custody^a
- 58% had a mental health or behavioural disorder diagnosed or suspected^a
- More than half used two or more substances^g
- 52% were totally disengaged from education, employment and training^a
- Almost 1 in 5 were homeless or had unsuitable accommodation^a
- 51% also had some involvement with Child Protection^h
- 33% of children and young people in detention have used Ice or other methamphetamines.^a
- 17% of children and young people had a disability diagnosed or suspected.^a

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are 31 times more likely to be held in custody compared with their non-Indigenous peers.^a

Over the past decade, we have learnt a lot more about child and adolescent development, especially brain development.

During adolescence, a young person's ability to undertake clear, logical and planned decision making, and to properly consider the consequences prior to acting, is still developing. A young person may have other cognitive impairments sustained as a result of childhood maltreatment, such as foetal alcohol syndrome, brain injury as a result of 'shaken baby syndrome' or violence, or other unexplained injuries and psychological impairments.

It is well established that children and young people who have experienced trauma and maltreatment, particularly in cases of severe neglect or abuse, may experience developmental issues and reduced resilience, along with immaturity and impulsivity. These factors increase the risk of offending and re-offending.

Risk taking behaviour in adolescents is well known. This is exacerbated when peer pressure is added. Contact with other children and young people who are offending increases the likelihood of further offending.

“Some words of wisdom I can give - if you put your mind to it anything is possible. The only person you should try to be better than, is the person you were yesterday.”

Grace*, age 17, former youth justice client and member of the elite football academy

** Name changed for privacy reasons.*



What works and **what doesn't**

Prevention works — addressing factors that lead to offending

There is substantial evidence of what works to reduce youth offending. A review of international evidence found ample support for approaches that deal with factors that lead to offending. This showed that prevention programs — such as those that improve parenting, strengthen community, support families at risk, address mental illness, disability and substance abuse and respond to childhood delay and education problems — are not only effective but are extremely cost-effective. Prevention generates long term savings to taxpayers by reducing pressure on detention centres, police and justice systems. These approaches also generated the greatest community benefit by avoiding the costs of crime victimisation.

Effective approaches boost protective factors and address risk factors. These work best when families and communities are engaged from the start, and when agencies and services work together to support them.

Since 2015 we have already used this evidence in Queensland to change the story. For example, we have reintroduced court ordered restorative justice conferencing — 59% of participants who completed a youth justice conference did not reoffend within six months.ⁱ We have also extended the Transition 2 Success program — 75% of program participants did not commit any further offences in the following six months.^j These reform initiatives have been based on the evidence from both other Australian and international jurisdictions, such as:

- **NSW** — where three juvenile detention centres have been closed in the five years to 2017.^k
- **Victoria** — where the number of young people sentenced in the Children's Court decreased by 43% between 2008-09 and 2014-15.^l
- **Scotland** — where offending by children and young people halved between 2008 and 2015.^m
- **New York** — where there has been a 53% decline in arrests of children and young people between 2012 and 2016.ⁿ

Detention — not the most effective way to reduce crime

Evidence shows that, for the majority of offenders, detention is not the best way to stop offending behaviour. Where custody is required, the best outcomes are achieved when pre- and post-release therapy are applied to reduce recidivism.

Children and young people who have been through detention are at more risk of committing offences when they return to the community.

- The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found that 82% of children and young people leaving detention returned within 12 months. While only 50% of children and young people leaving a supervised community order returned within 12 months.^o
- Over a 10 year period research showed that children and young people under community supervision had a stable return to supervision, but return to detention had risen.^o

Most offences committed by children and young people in Queensland are property offences, but research shows that detention has no impact on property crime.

Australian research also shows detention separates children and young people from important relationships including families.^p It exposes them to negative peers and increases their risk of further custody. Detention makes it harder to return to education and limits future employment opportunities.

Detention also comes at a significant cost to the community — in Queensland it costs about \$1500 per child, per day.^q A combination of other comprehensive strategies, even delivered intensively, will be significantly more cost effective.

Restorative Justice

A restorative justice conference is a meeting between a child or young person who has committed a crime and the people who were affected to discuss what happened, the impact, and what can be done to start making things right. Victims can talk about how they have been harmed and can have their questions answered. Children and young people are supported to take responsibility and make amends.

- Restorative justice has been evaluated¹ and shown to reduce re-offending:
 - › 59% of children and young people who completed a conference between 1 July 2016 to 31 December 2016 did not reoffend within six months of their conference
 - › 7% showed a substantial decrease in the magnitude of their re-offending
 - › 11% showed a slight decrease in the magnitude of their re-offending
- In total, 77% of children and young people either did not re-offend or showed a decrease in the magnitude of their re-offending.
- Victims and young people were positive about the conference process and outcomes:
 - › 89% of victims were ‘satisfied with the outcome of the conference’
 - › Over 70% of victim respondents reported the conference process would help them to ‘manage the effects of crime’.

Nathan, aged 15, had been homeless and heavily engaged in methamphetamine use. His offence involved a bag snatch in a carpark. His victim Carla, was not only frightened by the boldness and the violence of the attack, but was shocked that an Aboriginal boy had targeted her, an Aboriginal mum.*

After the attack Carla became scared to go out alone and was no longer able to use public transport.

Nathan was referred to a restorative justice conference. At this point, he did not see the impact on his victim beyond her loss of money. Carla agreed to the conference — she mostly wanted to ask him “Why did you do it?”

At the conference, Carla explained how hard it was for her to look after her kids with this fear hanging over her everywhere she went. She asked him why he chose to steal from his own people.

Nathan explained that he had no money of his own since he left home months ago - and hadn’t eaten for a while when he saw her in the carpark with the wallet poking out of her bag. Nathan thought she might not go to the police. He didn’t think she would be affected — it was just a pinched wallet.



After listening to Carla’s view point, he began to understand what had happened for her. He apologised and agreed to undertake voluntary work to help repair the harm.

Carla told the convenor she had a better understanding of Nathan’s situation at the time of his offending and she appreciated being involved in the restorative justice process.

*Nathan has had no further contact with the police since the conference.***

^{*} Name changed for privacy reasons. ^{**} Correct at time of publishing.

What we are already doing to start changing the story

What we are already doing to implement what works

Since 2015, the Queensland Government has done much to implement what works to tackle youth crime, including addressing the causes and consequences. We have a strong foundation to build on.

Initiatives we are implementing now to deliver what the evidence says works include:

Intervening early

- › Engaging families with information and advice through the *Talking Families*, *Triple P* and *First 1,000 Days* initiatives.
- › Supporting families at risk through the state-wide roll-out of 17 *Family and Child Connect* services, 40 *Intensive Family Support* services and 33 *Indigenous Family Wellbeing* services.
- › Preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence and its impacts on children and young people through the *Not Now, Not Ever* reforms.
- › Tackling the harmful effects of drugs on children and young people, families and communities, including through the *Action on Ice* plan and initiatives like *Breakthrough for Families*.
- › Developing and implementing the *Our Way Strategy* and creating the *Queensland First Children and Families Board* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and sector leaders to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families and improve life outcomes.
- › Built pathways to more safe, secure and affordable housing through the *Queensland Housing Strategy*.
- › Commenced Queensland's transition into the *National Disability Insurance Scheme*, to enable NDIS eligible Queenslanders with a disability access to reasonable and necessary supports.

Keeping children out of court

- › Engaging communities in finding local solutions to youth crime, such as through the *Townsville Stronger Communities – Community Youth Response*.
- › Continuing the diversion by police of children and young people.

- › Expanding the number of police officers eligible to conduct cautioning in accordance with the *Youth Justice Act 1992*.
- › Established the *Newpin*, *YouthChoices* and *YouthConnect* social benefit bonds to address the underlying causes of offending with family interventions and long term support to address youth homelessness and recidivism.
- › Created the *First Nations Youth Justice Action Board* and strengthened cultural initiatives.
- › Transitioned 17 year olds out of the adult justice system in line with all other states and territories in Australia.

Keeping children out of custody

- › Re-established the court's power to hold young offenders accountable to their victims in face to face *restorative justice conferences*.
- › Trialled supervised community accommodation as an alternative to remand in custody.
- › Expanded *bail support* to assist children and young people to obtain and complete bail requirements.

Reduce re-offending

- › Implementing the recommendations of the *Independent Review into Youth Detention*.
- › Implementing additional adolescent mental health and suicide prevention initiatives.
- › Linking children and young people to a suite of education, training and employment initiatives through the *Youth Engagement Alliance*.
- › Rolled out the *Transition 2 Success (T2S)* program to change the story for young people in youth justice through learning and job and life skills.

What works case study

T2S pathways and collaboration delivers results

Transition 2 Success (T2S) is an alternative education and occupational training program for young people at risk or in the youth justice system.

Youth workers partner with local businesses, TAFE and community organisations to support young people to gain certificate qualifications. T2S provides a supportive and therapeutic environment that enables young people to meet challenges in their life, and work towards a positive future that is not defined by their past behaviours.

- T2S state-wide is showing evidence of success in reducing re-offending.
- Deloitte Access Economics evaluation¹ indicated 75% of the young people who completed the program had not committed any offences in the following six months.
- These participants included young people at risk and young people with a history of offending.

Looking at just the young people who had a history of offending, 57% did not reoffend within six months. In a comparison group which were matched on all factors except for participation in T2S, only 41% did not re-offend. This difference in offending generated a benefit of \$2.50 in avoided costs of crime custody and supervision for every dollar spent.

- T2S brings together government and non-government organisations to address youth offending and get young people into training and real work.

As at October 2018, T2S participants have attained 331 vocational certificates. Almost all (95%) graduates successfully transition to education, training, employment, a job provider or another T2S course.²

Daniel was excluded from three different schools by year nine. He spent time in youth detention for property offences and violence, before being referred to T2S in March 2015. Through T2S he was able to obtain certificate qualifications, and secure a traineeship position with a government agency. Now 19, Daniel is working towards a Certificate III in Community Service so he can become a social worker. He is a mentor for current T2S participants, sharing his successes to motivate others to set goals for a positive future.*

** Name changed for privacy reasons.*





“Instead of looking at kids like they are criminals, they should be looking at them like they’ve got a troubled home and talk them through fixing their problems instead of bringing them here and making the problem worse.”

Consultation participant in detention

Delivering change: What are we going to do?

We are committed to building on our work to date by doing more of what works to reduce youth offending and re-offending and keep our communities safe. This means addressing the causes and consequences of youth offending by working together with children and young people, families and communities.

Changing stories for children and young people and their families and communities means tackling, from an early age through to when young people transition to adulthood, the key factors behind offending and re-offending, as well as their behaviours and choices, to provide pathways to better lives and brighter futures.

We will achieve this vision by focusing on four key areas:

Reduced offending

By working together with communities to act early to address the needs of families, carers, children and young people we can stop entry into the criminal justice system. A particular effort is needed to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people entering the criminal justice system to address their over-representation.

Research shows that the earlier a child or young person enters the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to continue to commit offences. This makes it even more important to deliver prevention and early intervention services that are community owned and delivered, supported by government, and which reflect local needs and circumstances.

Reduced re-offending

Current data shows 74% of children and young people with proven offences are charged with another offence within 12 months.^c We will work to reduce the rate of children and young people re-offending by 5% by 2020–21.

We also know that a relatively small number of children and young people commit a large proportion of offences. We need to focus our efforts and change the story for the 10% of young offenders who are responsible for over 40% of offences.^a

Reduced use of remand in custody^f

We need efficient and effective processes and supports to keep children and young people out of detention. In 2016–17, 86% of children and young people in detention haven't been convicted of an offence.^c Remand lasted an average of 36 days,^a but some children and young people stayed for months. The use of remand is expensive and ineffective in addressing the causes of children and young people's offending. We need to reduce the number of children and young people entering detention on remand for the first time by ensuring they spend only a minimum period of time on remand, have opportunity to apply for bail, and access to intensive support in the community when they need it.

Delivering more cost effective community based options

Where children and young people have committed serious violent offences, detention centres can be used to keep communities safe.

Last year 1,089 children and young people entered detention.^e The cost of keeping a young person in detention is about \$1500 each day^d — it's expensive and it does not effectively achieve their rehabilitation.

We need to use detention only for the small number of children and young people who pose a serious risk to the community. We also need to ensure that young people in detention are provided health, rehabilitation services and programs, are supported to develop education and vocational skills and are assisted to transition effectively back into their families and communities, and to adulthood.

What works case study

Townsville Stronger Communities Action Plan

As part of the Queensland Government's five-point plan to reduce youth crime in Townsville, a multi-agency taskforce was created in late 2016, comprising senior representatives seconded on a full-time basis from the following agencies: Queensland Police Service, Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Department of Education and Training, Department of Housing and Public Works, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Queensland Health.

Called the Townsville Stronger Communities Action Group, the taskforce is the first of its kind in the state. Its creation recognises the need for government agencies to go beyond 'business as usual' in tackling young offending by placing greater focus and resources on the underlying issues that lead some children and young people to offend.

It is also a recognition that if children and young people leaving detention or custody return to their previous environment and circumstances, they remain at a high risk of re-offending.

To achieve its aim of breaking the cycle of young

offending, the action group coordinates government and non-government services and targets young offenders and at-risk young people aged 8 to 24, and their families.

The group has been dealing with matters such as poor school attendance, mental health concerns, domestic violence, drug and substance misuse, housing and dysfunction within households. These issues are well-documented risk factors for recidivist offending.

Since its inception, the action group has had contact with, or monitored, 223 families of children and young people who have offended or are at risk of offending.⁵



Nearly

60

families have consented to receive intensive support.⁹

“It was a genuine consultation that was honest and transparent, and one that showed respect for us. We were pleased to be kept up to date along the way and informed about how our views were reflected in the final recommendations.”

Aboriginal Elder reflecting on the Townsville Community Champion's consultations

How will we do this?

We will deliver the following changes and initiatives. This includes specific work to implement the Atkinson Report recommendations.

Pillar 1: Intervene early

Our Priority

Children and young people in families at risk have their health, wellbeing, safety and education needs met:

- Babies are born healthy and immunised
- Children are screened for health issues including hearing and eyesight, and developmental delays
- Parents have access to parenting information and family, community and peer supports
- Children are engaged in early years programs and are ready for school
- Families access family support, well-being and other services that reduce risk of abuse, neglect and violence
- Families access specialist and clinical services that address health, developmental delays, impairments and/or problem behaviours
- School aged children are supported to stay engaged in schooling
- Children, young people and families are engaged in community, sport, recreation and cultural activities.

We will

- Take further action to increase the number of babies born healthier, increase childhood immunisation rates and improve well-being prior to school
- Take further action to identify and respond to children and young people at risk of disengaging from education
- Develop a *Queensland Early Years Plan*
- Consider the results of trials of *Nurse Navigators* and the *Navigate your Health* initiatives for children and young people in care and their possible application to youth justice
- Continue to roll out *Strengthening Families Changing Futures* initiatives
- Work with parent and family support and wellbeing services to engage parents of children and young people at risk of or already offending
- Provide families, carers and services supporting children and young people with challenging behaviours and complex needs better support through the new Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women's *Specialist Services Team* and other therapeutic, specialist behaviour and mental health services
- Continue to strengthen joint work across child protection and youth justice services, especially for children and young people on dual orders
- Develop a *Queensland Sport and Active Recreation Strategy* and engage vulnerable families, children and young people through place and case-based supports
- Implement recent Government responses to reports on *Cyberbullying* and *Youth Sexual Violence*
- Partner with communities and other governments in place-based initiatives to strengthen early intervention and improve outcomes for children and young people — like *Logan Together*, *More4Mackay*, *Cairns South* and *LiveWellCQ*
- Continue to improve information sharing across agencies
- Continue to invest in alternative schooling options for disengaged/at-risk young people.

Q What works case study — Collaborative projects in Cairns

Coordinated Care for Vulnerable Young People

This initiative arose in 2010 from a concern by agencies to address public risk-taking behaviour of a number of children and young people in Cairns, and to provide more coordinated services for vulnerable children and young people.

Through a panel which meets monthly, a range of agencies gather to assess referrals of vulnerable or ‘at risk’ children and young people, with their consent. A lead agency is identified for each referral that is accepted, and targeted care is coordinated through fortnightly or monthly meetings to track the progress

of the young person. An evaluation of Coordinated Care for Vulnerable People in October 2015 found that this was “an impressive example of government and community sectors working together to support at risk and vulnerable young people.”^t

Cairns Safer Streets

This project aims to improve community safety and wellbeing in West Cairns through community and whole-of-government partnerships.

The project gathers local data on risk, protective factors and offence trends and considers evidence of best practice to design and implement strategies to address local risks and priorities. The project has three objectives of reducing rates of youth re-offending, preventing

offending and connecting communities, and has seen 12 projects, comprising of 295 activities led or facilitated across Cairns, to achieve these goals.^u The initiative is led by the Cairns Safer Streets Executive, which includes representatives from a range of government agencies.

Space and Place Activities for Youth in Cairns project

This is a locally driven solution to reduce offending by encouraging at-risk children and young people to take up sport and active recreation.

Responding to requests from residents, Cairns Safer Streets worked across multiple agencies to establish activities for children and young people in Cairns after school and on weekends. The Minister for Sport recently announced a \$1 million, three-year pilot of this initiative after a successful trial that delivered a total of

1,748 instances of participation from April 2017 to June 2018. Activities included soccer, table tennis, frisbee, Zumba, robotics and mixed youth sports. New funding will enable the project to be scaled up to engage 1,600 children and young people on an average eight times each per school term.^v

How will we do this?

Pillar 2: Keep children out of court

Our Priority

Children and young people with early or low level offending have positive family and community influences, are engaged in education, training and alternative activities, and get support to address their behaviours:

- Families are actively engaged to address anti-social and illegal behaviours by parents and older siblings
- Children and young people's offending is dealt with swiftly and according to their age and developmental stage
- Children and young people and their families are actively connected to community, sport, recreation and cultural activities
- Children and young people at risk of disconnecting or being excluded from school are proactively re-engaged via multi-agency interventions
- Children and young people with early or low-level offending are actively diverted by police through warnings, cautions and referrals
- Children and young people on bail are supported to avoid re-offending or breaching bail
- Victims of young offending are provided with the supports they need to recover
- Explore opportunities to expand drug diversion for a minor drug offence.

We will

- Address local issues with young offending through place-based initiatives like *Townsville Stronger Communities*, *Cairns Safer Streets* and responses in Cherbourg and Aurukun
- Roll-out extra training, and continue to address barriers and explore options, for police across Queensland on appropriate use of diversionary options including warnings, cautions and referrals for restorative justice conferences and other services
- Improve the database available to police to better link children and young people and families to community services and diversionary intervention programs and activities
- Further consider options for more after-hours services and for more positive role models and mentors
- Explore a *Protected Admissions Scheme* led by Queensland Police Service so young people can acknowledge offending and be appropriately diverted
- Roll out extra bail support and legal advocacy services, and continue to explore options to reduce bail refusals and remands in custody
- Strengthen partnerships with Police Citizen Youth Clubs (PCYCs) and support for crime prevention initiatives such as *Breaking the Cycle*
- Implement the new joint agency protocol to reduce preventable police call-outs to residential care services
- Extend training in adolescent development and trauma-informed responses for workers across education, health, family support, youth, justice, other community services sectors
- Improve supports to children and young people in care, and training and support to their carers and support workers
- Support young people leaving care and/or justice supervision through transition to adulthood initiatives
- Develop a *Queensland Youth Partnerships Initiative* to link up with businesses and organisations supporting children and young people's development, reducing offending and providing positive pathways
- Participate in a national review of the age of criminal responsibility.

“The parole mob need to put kids in a culture program. Build up their self-esteem and identity – artefacts, cooking, mechanics, healing around the fire, yarning up. Our culture, our way... We need our young people to learn how to be Murris. We need our Murri people to do it. It's our responsibility and our moral right to speak our voice.”

Woorabinda community member



How will we do this?

Pillar 3: Keep children out of custody

Our Priority

Children and young people who have offended have a safe place to live and are supervised and supported to repair harms, address behaviours, and reconnect with families and communities as an alternative to incarceration:

- Children and young people who have caused harm make amends and are held accountable
- Victims of youth crime are provided with the supports they need to recover
- Children and young people without a safe place to live are assisted with alternative housing
- Criminal justice responses align with the age, culture and developmental stage of the children and young people
- Support for community leaders, groups, businesses and other stakeholders to be involved in preventing and responding to young offending.

We will

- Take further action to increase the number of children and young people engaged in education, training or employment
- Continue to identify and implement actions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of youth justice processes and proceedings
- Roll out extra *Youth Bail Support and Advocacy services* and strengthen Youth Justice supervision services to reduce offending, bail breaches and remand rates
- Trial the use of *Family Group Meetings* to address young offending as an enhancement of *Restorative Justice Conferencing*
- Engage more with Elders and community organisations providing cultural programs to respond to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who are committing offences
- Trial the *Justice Education Initiative* with education staff available in the Brisbane and Townsville Children's Courts
- Undertake specialist mental health, fitness for trial and soundness of mind assessments of children and adolescents through Child and Youth Mental Health Court Liaison Services
- Continue implementing the *Queensland Housing Strategy* and deliver more and an expanded range of supported youth housing and homelessness places
- Use multi-agency panels to coordinate case management, services and support children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours
- Develop a *Youth Justice Practice Framework* to strengthen capabilities in evidence-informed youth justice supervision, support and custodial practice.

“It works. It gives offenders an opportunity to turn their life around and take responsibility if they choose to and gives victims an opportunity to have their say and confront the offender.”

Restorative justice
conference participant



How will we do this?

Pillar 4: Reduce re-offending

Our Priority

Children and young people who are repeat offenders get responses, punishments and support that work to stop re-offending and enable successful reintegration with their families, culture and communities:

- Age, gender and culturally appropriate interventions result in behaviour change
- Intensive and integrated interventions happen when offending is persistent or serious
- Links are made to supports that enable healthy, positive and safe lifestyles and reduce substance misuse
- Children and young people are engaged in meaningful education, training and employment
- Children and young people get support and supervision to live in safe and stable places
- Children and young people leaving care or supervision access services that assist them transition successfully to adulthood.

We will

- Continue implementing the Education-led *Youth Engagement Alliance* and strengthen pathways, and re-engagement in training and education
- Use shared risk and need assessment tools to better predict and intervene effectively with children and young people most likely to reoffend
- Extend Intensive Case Management by Youth Justice Services for children and young people most likely to re-offend
- Work across agencies and services to improve access to therapeutic and rehabilitative responses to children and young people with impairments, challenging and harmful behaviours, mental health and substance misuse issues
- Target *Breakthrough for Families* services and other *Action on Ice* initiatives to families with children and young people who are re-offending
- Advance options to increase community service opportunities for children and young people on supervised orders and detention
- Work with the National Disability Insurance Agency and NGOs to ensure all eligible children and young people can access ‘reasonable and necessary’ disability supports
- Continue implementing the Government response from the *Independent Review into Youth Detention*
- Build on the successful *Transition 2 Success* program with stronger links to other training and employment pathways and programs
- Evaluate the *YouthChoices* and the *YouthConnect* social benefit bonds for their impact on offending and re-offending
- Commence a review of the *Youth Justice Act 1992*.

Where is this going **to take us?**

By working together to deliver this Youth Justice Strategy, we can realise our vision for safe communities, families that are able to nurture their children and young people, and a life of hope and opportunity, even for the most vulnerable children and young people.

This means all children and young people are engaged in meaningful activities, such as education, training or work, sport, recreation and community activities; and families are supported to nurture their children and help them take responsibility for putting things right when they do the wrong thing.

Communities will be:



- safer from crime
- more informed about children and young people
- confident their taxes will be spent on interventions that work
- confident that when a child or young person offends they will be dealt with in a way where they understand the consequences of their actions and are given support to do the right thing in the future
- involved in creating positive opportunities for children and young people.

Every child who commits an offence will be:



- held accountable for their actions
- helped to understand the impact of their actions
- treated in a way that reflects their age and abilities
- assisted to put things right and guided to have a positive future
- connected to family or other caring adults, and to their culture
- supported to address their needs, including health needs
- reconnected to education or training, and when old enough, to employment
- engaged in culture, arts, sport and recreation
- helped to recover from trauma
- heard and have their views taken into account
- able to make a positive contribution.

Their families and carers will be:



- supported to parent
- assisted to deal with their own needs and those of their children
- engaged to positively support and guide their children.

We will assess our progress and impact of the Youth Justice Strategy using available data, evaluation, case studies and research to see whether:

-  More children and young people are safe and well at home in family, culture and community
-  More children and young people are in education, training and/or employment
-  More children and young people are positively engaged in community, recreational, cultural and civic activities
-  Children and young people at risk are identified and assisted early via family, educational and community-based interventions
-  Children and young people at significant risk of getting into trouble are identified and assisted early via family, educational and community-based interventions
-  Children and young people with less serious and/or less frequent offending are diverted from the youth justice system
-  Children and young people with trauma, mental health, disability, developmental delay and/or risky and challenging behaviours are identified early and assisted through integrated and therapeutic interventions
-  Fewer children and young people are victims of offending
-  Fewer children and young people are committing offences
-  Fewer children and young people are re-offending and/or committing serious offences
-  Fewer children and young people are incarcerated or breaching bail or supervised orders
-  The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in youth justice is reduced.

We will also assess whether:

-  Agencies and sectors, and citizens and communities, are actively engaged in preventing, intervening and responding to support families and create positive pathways for children and young people.

Together that means

-  Safer communities.

The Atkinson Report recommended a number of targets, which included reducing the number of children and young people remanded in custody, halving the number of children and young people entering detention for the first time, and reducing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in youth justice. Through the Action Plan, we will identify specific targets for the Youth Justice Strategy.

Working together: Changing the story

Changing stories for children and young people, their families and communities means working together.

The Youth Justice Strategy is a call to action for governments, families, businesses, communities, professionals and citizens. It links to a suite of other strategies in areas including family support, early years, education, health and mental health, substance misuse, disability, housing, sport and recreation, domestic and family violence prevention, training and employment.

Importantly, the Queensland Government has made *Keep Communities Safe* one of six top priorities, and has set targets to reduce youth re-offending and crime victimisation through the *Our Future State* framework released in mid-2018.

Work is also underway on other *Our Future State* priorities — Giving all our Children a Great Start, Keeping Queenslanders Healthy, and Creating Jobs in a Strong Economy, all of which will contribute to achieving the objectives of the Youth Justice Strategy.

This includes responding to over-representation to change the story for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families. This will support their full participation in Queensland's vibrant economic, social and cultural life and provide them with the opportunity to thrive in their communities.

This Strategy will be supported by a whole-of-government Action Plan to deliver the key priorities and initiatives of the Youth Justice Strategy. It will evolve as actions are completed and new opportunities are identified.

Implementation will be overseen by a cross-agency senior executive group reporting to the Minister responsible for Youth Justice. The Minister will also be advised by a Youth Justice Strategy Implementation Reference Group comprising a broad range of community leaders, sector representatives and experts. Regional Child, Youth and Family Committees will be tasked to drive regional and local action and collaboration.

Keeping communities safe is everyone's business. Government investment needs to be supported by community partnerships. We need everyone involved who can make a difference.

Partnerships between government and local communities will strengthen the way we work together to prevent and respond to youth offending, and ensure local responses match local concerns. This includes better information sharing.

Partnerships between government and peak community and industry bodies will also ensure state-wide and whole of sector responses to shared concerns.

There is something everyone can do that will make a positive difference. Just one trusted adult, one good chance in a child or young person's life can make a world of difference.

“In my experience, the community has much to offer in regard to solutions for youth justice and is the starting point to creating the conditions for positive change.”

Major General (ret'd) Stuart Smith AO DSC, Townsville Community Champion

Together we've got the best chance of changing the story for children and young people and keeping communities safe.



“I love my job and I’m proud that I can now support myself and am in the process of moving into my own unit. Getting my first pay cheque was the best feeling ever. I will never forget that day. When I first heard that I had a job it spun me out because I am the first male in my whole family to get a job.”

T2S participant

What works case study

Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their communities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have strong cultural and community networks and ways of raising children and young people that encourage development, resourcefulness and resilience.

We know that Elders and leaders within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are powerful agents of change. We are committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Elders and leaders to

prevent and address crime in their communities and provide support to children and young people which helps them achieve their full potential.

Aurukun initiatives

The Aurukun Justice Reintegration Project and the Deadly Runners program are two initiatives proving that collaborative partnerships between government and community can change the lives of children and young people.

The reintegration project provides practical support to adults, children and young people in custody and during their transition back into the community.

The project is changing young people's lives. One young person, for example, had been in custody regularly from a very young age. Extensive trauma meant he was unpredictable and sometimes violent. With intensive support from the project he engaged with Centrelink, registered for work and accessed health and mental health support. He now engages in the Youth Justice program *Transition 2 Success* (T2S), cultural and sporting activities. This young person has progressed from a history of serious offending to having only one minor offence since being released from custody in 2017.

The project has also been changing community safety. In March 2018, it was reported that court appearances for

children and young people had reduced.⁵

The Deadly Runners program is coordinated by the Aurukun T2S program. In 2018, the community raised \$25,000 and donated hundreds of pairs of running shoes to get a team of four young people to Uluru to represent Aurukun at the National Deadly Running Championships. Their selection was dependent on their positive engagement with the T2S program or school.

The four young runners were congratulated at the finish line by world champion marathon runner, Mr Robert De Castella, AO, MBE. Huge smiles showed their sense of achievement, which continues to grow. Two of the young people, previously disengaged from school, have applied to attend boarding school with another young person in their team. Aurukun Elders believe the young people are the first Aurukun community members to visit Uluru.



What we can do together

Community leaders, Elders and local governments

- Engage children and young people, especially those at risk, in civic and cultural activities that shape your communities
- Promote opportunities for positive youth development and activities
- Work together to create youth-friendly spaces and places
- Model the respectful behaviours and attitudes we want children and young people to follow
- Share factual information about young offending, what works and what doesn't.

Businesses and business organisations

- Offer children and young people at risk or under supervision orders opportunities for work placements, traineeships, apprenticeships and employment
- Access training and resources on dealing with children and young people, adolescent development and situational crime prevention
- Support foundations and local organisations that work directly with children and young people at risk
- Work together to create youth-friendly spaces and places.

Community and service organisations

- Offer mentoring and other positive activities to children and young people
- Positively engage families at risk and link them to services and supports
- Offer community service or work placement opportunities for children and young people at risk or under supervised orders
- Link with other services to provide integrated responses to children and young people with complex needs and challenging behaviours.

Sporting organisations and administrators

- Provide positive role models for children and young people and give them the opportunity to develop important social skills
- Link at-risk children, young people and families to the wider community and support services
- Keep children and young people active and engaged with positive activity reducing the risk they will drift into anti-social behaviour
- Provide assistance with transport for at-risk children and young people so they can stay involved in sport.

Professionals and educators

- Support positive futures for children and young people
- Be someone they can trust and turn to when they need support
- Understand trauma and its impact on children and young people and their ability to learn
- Provide services in a way that respects and strengthens the cultural connection of children and young people.

Parents and families

- Seek out information, advice and help if you need it
- Participate in local groups and available programs, such as *Triple P*
- Encourage the respectful behaviours and attitudes we want children and young people to follow
- Engage in the early years and with schools to keep children and young people in learning
- Engage with services and supports when significant health and other issues or problems emerge.

“We believe the best way to give our young people hope and opportunity is to get them participating in the community and taking responsibility. We set goals together. We get them involved in employment programs. We help them connect to their culture and country. We discuss leadership possibilities with them. This is what is turning things around for us.”

Aurukun Shire Council Mayor Walpo

Next steps



New and current services

- Bail Support
- Legal Advocacy
- Housing under Youth and Family Head Leasing
- Education needs assessed at court
- Mental Health Youth Forensic assessment improvement
- Transition 2 Success

Early
2019



Changes have commenced

- New ways of engaging communities are activated
- Different approaches are being used in existing services

Late
2019



Actions are under way

- Advancing Queensland — Keep Communities Safe
- Communities are safer, offending has declined

Mid
2021

Mid
2023

Youth Justice Action Plan



- Action Plan released
- Agencies commit to action
- Timing of actions scheduled

Check in on Action Plan



- Are we progressing as planned?
 - What are our early learnings?
- What do we stop doing?
- What do we continue?

Review Youth Justice Strategy and Action Plan



“My family are really proud of me, especially my mum. She has seen what I been through and she’s proud of me.”

T2S participant



Youth Justice Strategy Reference Group

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women gratefully acknowledges the Youth Justice Strategy Reference Group which has made a significant contribution to the development of the Queensland Government's Youth Justice Strategy.

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Commissioner of Queensland Police Service*

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*Former Social Justice Australian Human Rights
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Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Branch Department of
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Major General (Retd) Stuart Smith AO
DSC, Townsville Community Champion

Keri Tamwoy
Family Responsibilities Commission, Aurukun

Lindsay Wegener
Executive Director, PeakCare Queensland

The Honourable Margaret White
Former Queensland Judge and NT Royal Commissioner

Janet Wight
Director, Youth Advocacy Centre



For more information visit: www.csyw.qld.gov.au/youthjustice

Footnotes

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