



Office of the
Minister for Children and Youth Justice
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Our reference: MO ID# 10262 CYJMA 02602-2022

4 August 2022

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

Mr Joel Richters
Joel.Richters@qldlabor.org.au

Dear Mr Richters,

I refer to your correspondence to the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence regarding community concerns about youth bail. As the matters you have raised fall within the ministerial responsibilities of the Honourable Leanne Linard MP, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs, your correspondence has been forwarded to her office for reply. The Minister has asked me to respond on her behalf.

All Queenslanders should feel safe in their homes and communities, including communities that border two Australian states. Reducing crime and increasing community safety remains of the highest priority of the department. As the matter you referred to is currently before the courts, it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on that specific case.

Minister Linard takes this issue very seriously and has written to her New South Wales counterpart, the Honourable Natasha Maclaren-Jones MP, Minister for Families and Communities, and Minister for Disability Services, to discuss concerns about youth crime with respect to cross border issues.

Further action to address this issue has also occurred at a departmental level. On 16 May and 24 June 2022 Youth Justice Queensland executives met with their counterparts from New South Wales to ensure agencies from both states are working collaboratively with young people who travel to Queensland from New South Wales and commit offences.

Similarly, the Honourable Mark Ryan MP, Minister for Police and Corrective Services and Minister for Fire and Emergency Services has been part of ongoing discussions regarding the powers the respective Queensland and New South Wales police agencies have in relation to both adults and young people crossing the border and offending.

In February 2021, the Government established a Youth Justice Taskforce (the Taskforce) to oversee youth justice reforms. The Taskforce is now focused on building intensive multi-agency case management of the serious repeat offenders across the state. This includes each agency 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.

The Taskforce through representatives of the Queensland Police Service and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs will be visiting Goondiwindi to discuss these issues with Mayor Lawrence Springborg in the near future.

Investing in cross border responses to offending is one of the many ways the Government is working to keep communities safe. As you acknowledged in your correspondence, there has been significant investment in youth justice reforms by the Palaszczuk Government.

Since 2017, more than \$750 million has been invested in early and intensive intervention programs to reduce reoffending, and additional youth detention centres, staffing and extra beds. This includes an funding increase in 2022–23 of \$78.8 million to continue delivery of youth justice strategy reforms that aim to deliver a balanced, evidence-based youth justice system that holds young people accountable for their behaviour. This investment has helped divert young people from offending and reoffending and has provided opportunities for young people to turn their lives around and change their stories.

We are seeing the impact of this record investment, with the Australia Bureau of Statistics (2022) showing that for the 2020-2021 financial year the number of young people committing offences is at its lowest level in a decade. Young people make up a decreasing percentage of all offenders, declining from 17 per cent in 2011-12 to 12 per cent in 2020-21. However, we know there is always more to be done to reduce youth offending.

In 2021-22 and 2022-23, the Government is delivering on initiatives that continue to address youth crime, by focusing on serious repeat offenders. We know a small proportion of young people commit a large proportion of offences. This has included legislative amendments to strengthen how young people who offend are dealt with in the court system, such as:

- Young people on bail charged with certain offences committed while on bail are required to show cause when applying for bail. Showing cause is a high threshold to meet and means the police and courts must refuse bail unless the young person can persuade the decision-maker that they are not an unacceptable risk and their continued detention is not justified.
- Courts having the ability to consider whether parents, guardians and others are willing to support the child to comply with bail conditions before bail is granted.
- A new principle in the *Youth Justice Act 1992* that stresses the community should be protected from offences, in particular, recidivist high-risk offenders.
- Making it a requirement in sentencing young people that courts consider whether offences were committed while on bail.

These amendments had an immediate effect. They commenced on 30 April 2021, and the average number of children in custody the following month rose by over 30, to be 70 higher than the same month the previous year. By September 2021, they were up by another 20, 101 more than the same month the previous year.

To support the initiatives put in place to protect our communities, the Government has also committed to deploying 2025 extra police, the largest investment in police for decades.

While we have a strong focus on keeping our communities safe, it is important to recognise there will always be young people who, despite the best intentions of Government and the help available, may still break the law. We will continue to hold them to account.

There are no quick fixes to address youth crime, it requires a range of coordinated responses. Minister Linard continues to engage with regional communities at every

opportunity to better understand their specific issues and how to continue to best address youth offending.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact Ms Kiara Malley, Acting Manager, Office of the Regional Director, South West Region, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs on 3432 1922.

Thank you for writing to the Minister.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Condren", with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Bernadette Condren
Chief of Staff
Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Justice and
Minister for Multicultural Affairs