



# Youth support is the key to youth justice

The current commentary on concerns around youth justice are welcomed by the Moderator of the Uniting Church in Queensland, Rev Andrew Gunton. The Uniting Church was founded on a commitment to social justice “we are called to speak up for the value, welfare and dignity of all people, particularly those who are vulnerable” he said.

“ The issues of youth justice are immensely complex - we understand the desire for a quick solution to this problem, but long-lasting solutions need to address why young people offend, rather than focus on the incarceration of children.

The Queensland Synod is deeply concerned about the conditions for youth offenders in detention, which have been highlighted in recent media reporting. We also advocate raising the age of criminal responsibility in Queensland to 14 years, consistent with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory.

We echo the 2020 report prepared by the *Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group* for the Council of Attorneys-General review which recommends that the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments should raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years of age without exception.

We recognise that there are significant community concerns related to youth crime. There is certainly a need for boundaries around and consequences for anti-social behaviour however these consequences need to be embedded in a trauma informed justice system that is dedicated to breaking cycles of violence, addiction, and socio-economic disadvantage. Family support services are crucial in helping the whole family. Unfortunately, there are long waiting lists to access these services due to a lack of funding.”

“If we address family issues at an early stage and provide therapeutic, flexible and innovative support for children, we have a better chance of reducing youth offending and increasing the wellbeing and security of the whole community rather than entrenching the disadvantage through incarceration which marginalises and traumatises at-risk youth” he said.

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**Note for media:** The Uniting Church in Queensland’s position paper on youth justice is available [here](#).

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