



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian children under threat as dangerous laws pass in Queensland

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services have condemned the passage of Queensland's 'adult crime, adult time' laws, which will backfire and make communities more dangerous.

The new laws introduce mandatory prison sentences for a host of offences which will apply to children as young as 10. The laws also overturn the fundamental principle that the imprisonment of children should be a last resort.

"We know that locking children up only increases crime. We know that longer sentences do nothing to deter future offending. And we know these laws will fail Queensland communities – especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children," said Karly Warner, Chair of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), the peak organisation representing Aboriginal community-controlled legal services across Australia.

"Queensland already locks up more children than any other state. If jailing kids worked, Queensland would already be the safest place in Australia," Ms Warner said. "Communities deserve laws based on evidence about what works, not empty slogans. Youth crime has decreased over the past two decades in Queensland, but these laws will create more crime, more violence and more victims."

"The research is clear that locking up more and more children will be counter-productive to the goal of safer communities. The government should be leading public opinion rather than following it – and being 'smart on crime': addressing the upstream drivers of offending behaviour such as housing, education, employment and health," said Greg Shadbolt, Acting Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) Queensland.

NATSILS continues to call for investment in responses which prioritise prevention and early intervention, especially programs and services which are on Country and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations.

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