



**youth affairs network qld**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Renewed call for Youth Justice two-point plan**

With the Queensland parliament set to debate the legislation on transfer of 17 –year-old children to youth detention this week, Youth Affairs Network of Queensland’s (YANQ) Director Siyavash Doostkhah, has renewed his call for a two-point plan that will allow a smooth transition from adult prisons to the youth justice system which will also ensure the safety and well-being of children under 13.

“The best course of action is for the government to simultaneously changes the age of criminal responsibility and by doing so, releases all young people 13 and under into care of the community. The youth detention centres are also choc-a-block with children on remand, over 85% of children kept in detention are on remand and the majority never get a custodial sentence, meaning the only time they have been kept in a detention centre is when they are on remand. Dealing with the remand issue will free up more than necessary number of beds required for the transfer of 17 year olds from adult prisons to youth detention.” Mr Doostkhah said.

If the above Two Point Plan is implemented, not only there will be no need for any additional facilities but rather, there will be much operational savings in these facilities that could fund prevention programs in the community.

The LNP has once again demonstrated that they are a party of recalcitrant by announcing during Queensland children’s week that they will not support the removal of children from adult prisons. “LNP has clearly shown that they are morally bankrupt wanting to score cheap political scores rather than looking after the well-being of Queensland children” said Mr Doostkhah.

There are much better ways and proven strategies of best practice in dealing with youth issues. For example, Scandinavian countries have been highly successful in approaching youth issues as welfare and not criminal justice. Many Scandinavian countries have set the age of criminal responsibility at 15. The rate of youth incarceration in Scandinavian countries is very low, for example in Finland only 0.2 children in 100,000. This low rate has been attributed to government’s welfare-based prevention of juvenile crime.

YANQ wants to see the Queensland government shift the responsibility for the management of youth justice from the Attorney General’s portfolio back to the Community and Youth portfolio. “Many of the children in the youth justice system also have a history involving the child protection system and it would be much better for these children to have their protection and rehabilitation integrated, and their rights upheld by the Minister responsible for children and youth” said Mr Doostkhah.

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