



youth affairs network qld

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Justice restrained by review's ToR

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's (YANQ) Director Siyavash Doostkhah, has welcomed the announcement by the State Government that Labor will introduce legislation to Parliament next week to end the practice of treating 17-year-olds as adults in Queensland's justice system.

However, Mr Doostkhah has raised concerns about the parameters of the Youth Justice Review which was announced at the same time. The media statement from the government acknowledges that we have a problem with the remand regime in Queensland. The Government media release states that "only about one in five children in youth detention centres are there as a result of charges of which they've been convicted". Matter of fact more than 80% of children in youth detention centres at any point of time are on remand and it makes no sense for the review not to investigate why we have such an over reliance on remand.

The premier has jumped the gun by saying "a new youth justice facility may need to be built". There is absolutely no need for another youth detention centre in Queensland. Experts have been advising the successive government that the way to deal with complexities of moving 17 year olds into youth detention centres are to deal with the overuse of remand and to raise the age of criminal responsibility to a minimum of 13. These two actions will easily vacate over 90% of the beds currently available in the youth detention centres and is the most cost effective approach available.

"We hope the government will allow the review to look at the issue of transferring 17 year olds into youth justice system as well as all other problems in the system in an integrated way. This is a great opportunity not to just patch things up but to bring the Queensland youth justice system into the 21st century" said Mr Doostkhah.

YANQ is also renewing its call for the Queensland Government to shift the responsibility for the management of youth justice from the Attorney General's portfolio back to the Community and Youth portfolio. Mr Doostkhah said, "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. The review should look at this issue as this is fundamental to how the system operates".

YANQ is also concerned that LNP has historically been unsupportive of moving 17 year olds into youth justice system and has used the issue to drum up a law and order hysteria. "The lack of any supportive statement from the opposition so far today is damning. If the LNP tries to play politics with this issue they will be sinking to depths of moral bankruptcy and will be judged harshly by Queensland voters", said Mr Doostkhah.

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