



youth affairs network qld

## MEDIA RELEASE

9<sup>th</sup> September 2016

### Queensland Government not off the hook yet

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), has renewed its call for a Royal Commission into the youth justice system in Queensland. YANQ's director Mr Siyavash Doostkhah said, "in light of this week's release of the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the review by the Queensland Government, we are renewing our call for a Royal Commission as we are still of the view that this is the most effective way for the system to be thoroughly investigated and for all options for genuine reform to be explored".

"At the same time as announcing the ToR for the Queensland review, which are highly restricted, the Premier and Attorney General made some very concerning statements about the possible need to expand the youth detention centres" Mr Doostkhah said.

It is of paramount importance that the Government investigates the possibility of changing the age of criminal responsibility which could result in releasing 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. "A genuine reform of Queensland's youth justice system should see the majority of the current beds in youth detention centres being vacated and the millions of dollars spent on imprisoning children, be spent on prevention programs" Mr Doostkhah said.

There are also many other important matters which need to be looked at and the ToR for the Queensland Government's review will not allow this. "That is why YANQ is renewing its call for a Royal Commission and supporting the Green's proposal for a two-tiered approach to the existing Royal Commission, whereby the Commission would focus on and report first on the Northern Territory and Don Dale, and the second part could investigate youth detention across the country" said Mr Doostkhah.

YANQ also 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".

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