



4th July 2022

The Hon. Mark Dreyfus QC, MP, Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary
The Hon. Linda Burney, MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians
The Hon. Dr Anne Aly, MP, Minister for Youth and Minister for Early Childhood Education

*Cc: The Hon. Chanston Paech, Attorney-General
The Hon. Shannon Fentiman, Attorney-General
The Hon. Mark Speakman, Attorney-General
Mr Shane Rattenbury, Attorney-General
The Hon. Jaclyn Symes, Attorney-General
The Hon. Elise Archer, Attorney-General
The Hon. Kyam Maher, Attorney-General
The Hon. John Robert Quigley, Attorney General*

Dear Attorney-General, Minister Burney, and Minister Aly,

Congratulations on your recent election victory and your respective appointments as Attorney-General and Cabinet Secretary, Minister for Indigenous Australians, and Minister for Youth and Early Childhood Education. We are writing today as 82 organisations who are part of the national Raise the Age alliance to raise the age of criminal responsibility across Australia to at least 14 years of age.

We have been extremely heartened by recent public comments that the current age of criminal responsibility at ten years old is too young and that the Commonwealth can take a leadership role working with all states and territories to achieve this reform.

Our organisations are committed to working collaboratively with the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people by raising the age and implementing therapeutic and age-appropriate services that provide alternatives to the current criminal legal system.

Over the past two years, we have consistently engaged in the Meeting of Attorneys-General (MAG) process on this issue. Many of our organisations provided detailed submissions to the MAG Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group in 2020 addressing why the age needs to be raised to at least 14 and what a new system should look like.

As the MAG did not make the submissions public, we have self-published a number of the alliances' submissions on the Raise the Age website [here](#). The [public statement](#) released to accompany the publication of these submissions highlights the delays in the MAG process. We are hopeful that your new government will seize the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in the MAG process and address this issue with the urgency it needs.

We note the announcement in November last year that the MAG agreed to 'support the development of a proposal to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12'. We wish to reiterate that the medical evidence and internationally accepted standards make it clear that 14 is the bare minimum for the age of criminal responsibility. The health and medical organisations who are part of this campaign have previously outlined the



comprehensive evidence for raising the age to at least 14 in an open letter which can be found [here](#).

The current low age of criminal responsibility disproportionately impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and is a key driver of contact with police and the legal system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the right to grow up connected to culture and in a safe and healthy environment. They must be supported to remain with their families and communities. Raising the age of criminal responsibility would have an immediate and generational impact on the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This reform is likely to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in detention, which is a Closing The Gap target.

It is essential that all Australian governments raise the age to at least 14 in order to protect the rights and health of our children. Our organisations and the communities we represent will remain strong and united and will continue to work together until the age is raised to at least 14 in all jurisdictions.

The 27th of July this year will mark two years since the MAG was presented with the report prepared by the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group, based on our submissions. This report recommended that the age be raised to 14 with no carve-outs for any crimes or circumstances. This date will also mark three and a half years since the MAG first committed to working on this issue.

We are hopeful that another year will not go by with this devastating status quo being perpetuated. Every time a child below the age of 14 is taken into the legal system, this causes harm to the child, their family, the community, and the reputation of Australia on the international stage.

We look forward to your continued leadership in this area and working with you and your government to achieve this vital reform to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14.

Yours sincerely,

Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)



ACOSS



ACTCOSS



Amnesty International Australia





Anglicare Southern Queensland



ANTaR



Australian Association of Social Workers



Australian Healthcare & Hospitals Association



Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association



Australian Law Students' Association



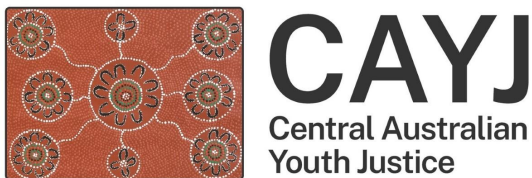
Australian Research Alliance for Children & Youth



Australian Youth Affairs Coalition



Central Australian Youth Justice



The Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare



Centre for Innovative Justice



Change the Record





Children and Young People with Disability Australia



Children and Young People with Disability Australia

Connected Self



Children's Ground



children's ground

Curtin University



Deadly Connections



DEADLY CONNECTIONS
COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SERVICES

Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria



FEDERATION
OF COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRES VIC

For-Purpose Evaluations



Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education



Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education

Foundation for Young Australians



Hello Initiative



Human Right Law Centre

Human
Rights
Law
Centre.

Illawarra Women's Health Centre





Jesuit Social Services



Just Reinvest NSW



JusTas



The Justice Reform Initiative



The Kimberley Foundation



Koorie Youth Council



Law Council of Australia



Life Without Barriers



Mission Australia



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners



National Justice Project





National Legal Aid



Ngala



NT Legal Aid Commission



NTCOSS



Orygen



Outcare



Partnership for Justice in Health



PeakCare Queensland



Public Health Association of Australia



Public Interest Advocacy Centre



QCOSS



The Royal Australasian College of Physicians





The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners



RACGP
Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists



The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists



Rise



SACOSS



The Salvation Army



SA Network of Drug and Alcohol Services (SANDAS)



Save the Children



Social Reinvestment WA



TasCOSS



St John's Youth Services



UNICEF Australia



Uniting





UnitingCare Australia



Uniting Church in Australia Queensland Synod



Uniting Church in Australia Synod of Victoria and Tasmania



VACRO



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service



VCOSS



WACOSS



Women's Justice Network



World Vision Australia



Yfoundations



Youth Affairs Network of Queensland



Yorgum Healing Services





Youthlaw



Youth Action



Youth Advocacy Centre



Youth Affairs Council Victoria



Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia



Youth Law Australia

