



Partnership for  
**JUSTICE IN HEALTH**

## RAISE THE AGE

All children deserve to grow and develop in environments of unconditional love and support. Friday's decision at the Meeting of Attorneys General (MAG) ignored the urgency and significance of Australia's youth justice problem by '*supporting the development of a proposal to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12*' despite having committed to a similar proposal three years ago. This decision is another empty commitment and delay at the expense of the health and wellbeing of children.

There is a tangible human and economic cost to every delay of raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14. Youth offending is the result of government failures, at all levels, to create and maintain effective early intervention and support systems that promote healthy childhoods and education. We cannot continue expecting young people to bear the burden of the failures of policy makers.

As a partnership formed to address the impacts of racism within the health and justice systems - P4JH is acutely aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are grossly overrepresented in youth incarceration rates. We also know that our children are targeted by police, based on the colour of their skin. This is especially a concern when we consider the quality of health care and social and emotional wellbeing support available for children that are incarcerated and inevitably, being further traumatised in the process.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Law Council of Australia and the Australian Medical Council have, along with countless other experts, called for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to at least 14 years old and have noted the significant health impacts of incarceration on the growth and development of children. Further, the health advice recognises that young people have not developed the neurological functioning to even form criminal intention and are medically incapable of fully comprehending the consequences of their actions.

Simply, Attorney Generals around the country must honour the integrity of health expertise. Nationally, we have trusted our health experts to get us through the COVID 19 pandemic and, equally so, we must listen to them as they insist that imprisoning children under 14 years old is causing irreparable harm and devastation in the lives of our future generations.

P4JH would like to commend the ACT on remaining steadfast in its commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14. Other jurisdictions must also #RaisetheAge to at least 14 years old with no exceptions or carve outs, it is the only acceptable first step in addressing the youth justice emergency in this country. Join us in calling for an end to this racist legislation so all children can live and thrive in safe environments

Our children deserve better than attempts at placating public sentiment with nothing proposals.

To sign the petition and support #RaisetheAge visit [raisetheage.org.au](https://raisetheage.org.au)

For more information on the Partnership for Justice in Health, visit our website [p4jh.org.au](https://p4jh.org.au)