Partnership for Justice in Health

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs

Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system

October 2024

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Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitution Affairs Committee
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Dear Ms Dunstone,

Re: P4JH's submission to the Senate Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system

Thank you for the opportunity to make a written submission to contribute to the Senate Inquiry in Australia's youth justice and incarceration system.

By way of background, the Partnership for Justice in Health (P4JH) is an alliance of self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, legal experts, and national peak health and justice organisations committed to working together to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and justice outcomes through addressing racism at the individual, institutional and systemic level, specifically focusing on the health and justice systems. As a result, we are well placed to provide a written submission on the key issues and challenges for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people involved in Australia's youth justice system.

The over-incarceration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children is by no means a new issue. Despite being the subject of countless inquiries, reports and reviews, little has been done to address this issue on a practical level. Our children and young people are our future, and we want them to thrive, but the current justice and health systems are failing them. We encourage transformation of the current systems to enable our peoples' self-determination, community leadership, and approaches that are based on a holistic approach to health and wellbeing.

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In summary, we recommend that the Senate Committee:

1. Encourages and supports the Australian government to fully implement all international Conventions relating to youth justice, including systems reforms to ensure that these rights are protected and elevated
2. Advocates for a shift shifting away from tough-on-crime approaches to youth justice and addressing the social and cultural determinants of incarceration through:
    a. Advocating early childhood and school systems that are culturally safe, trauma-informed and include an awareness of and support for children with disability, to assist those experiencing difficulties in early childhood and prevent matriculation onto prisons.
    b. Advocating for further justice reinvestment initiatives that offer culturally safe alternative pathways to youth detention for Indigenous children with complex needs
    c. Supporting all jurisdictions to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 with no exceptions
    d. Advocate for incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have access to culturally safe, continuous health care from Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisaitons rather than prison health systems
    e. Advocate for Medicare Benefits Schedules and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme to become available to all children and young people in prisons

Please find our submission attached. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss any of the issues contained therein.

Yours sincerely,

The Partnership for Justice in Health

Partnership for JUSTICE IN HEALTH

1. About the Partnership for Justice in Health

The Partnership for Justice in Health (P4JH) is an alliance of self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, legal experts, and national peak health and justice organisations committed to working together to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and justice outcomes. As leaders operating at the interface of the health and justice systems, we commit to harnessing our leadership, influence, and networks towards realising our vision that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy health and wellbeing that is free of racism in the health and justice systems'.

Our campaign is unlike any other. We have a unique understanding of the ongoing impact that racism and colonisation continues to have on our people. We fill a crucial gap by amplifying the voices and lived experiences of families severely impacted by racism in the health and justice systems. As experts in this area, we are well positioned to provide advice to decision-makers. Now, we are seeking to elevate our profile in order to support our communities and influence a cultural shift across the health and justice systems.

Our Leadership Group consists of:

1. Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
2. Carumba Institute
3. Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
4. Change the Record
5. The Dhadjowa Foundation
6. First Peoples Disability Network Australia
7. Indigenous Allied Health Australia
8. Institute for Collaborative Race Research
9. Lowitja Institute
10. National Association for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Health Practitioners
11. National Justice Project
12. Professor Juanita Sherwood (Independent)

2. General Preamble

Given the scope of our campaign, this submission will specifically focus on the key issues and challenges affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. To accommodate this approach, we have rearranged the order of the Terms of Reference in our response below.

Section A will provide an overarching background to our submission. It includes a high-level overview of recent statistical data and current policy frameworks and initiatives in response **the over-incarceration of First Nations Children**.

Section B will highlight **the outcomes and impacts of over-incarceration** on an individual and structural level. It will analyse recent shifts in state and territory approaches to youth justice, whilst also identifying the detrimental impacts of over-incarceration on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Section C will provide a consolidated breakdown of **The Commonwealth's international obligations in regard to youth justice including the rights of the child, freedom from torture and civil rights.**

Section D will build on the international obligations identified in Section C to highlight **degree of compliance and non-compliance by state, territory and federal prisons and detention centres with the human rights of children and young people in detention.** In particular it will analyse the degree of compliance in relation to specific internation obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and where relevant other international Conventions.

Finally, Section E will propose various solutions and initiatives that can be adopted to ensure approaches to youth justice **are consistent with our international obligations**. It will advocate for approaches reducing rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration that are underpinned by a social determinants approach to incarceration, rooted in self-determination and community led and controlled.

3. Responding to the Terms of Reference

A. The over-incarceration of First Nation's children

The over-incarceration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Australia's criminal justice system is well-recognised in literature, policy frameworks and initiatives. Evidence shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are arrested, convicted and incarcerated at a disproportionate rate to non-Indigenous children. In 2021, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were incarcerated at 20 times the rate than non-Indigenous children, and while only making up 6% of the youth population aged 10-17 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprised a daily average of almost 50% of the youth detention population.[1]

In response Target 11 of the National Agreement to Close the Gap seeks to reduce the rate of youth detention by at least 30% by 2031. To accelerate positive justice outcomes, the Federal Government established the 'Justice Policy Partnership' which brings together representatives from the Coalition of the Peaks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts and all Australian governments to address the drivers of crime and guide community-led justice reinvestment reform across Australia. In 2023, $69 million dollars were made available through Commonwealth funding to create sustainable change through building the necessary capacity within 30 Indigenous and community-led and place-based justice reinvestment initiatives. Additionally, in 2018 the Australian Law Reform Commission tabled its 'Pathways to Justice – Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Report' which provides 35 recommendations designed to reduce the disproportionate rate of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and improve community safety.

B. The outcomes and impacts of youth incarceration in jurisdictions across Australia

Yet, despite this widespread recognition, little is being done to respond to these recommendations on a practical level. Recent initiatives seeking to reduce overincarceration remain piecemeal and ad hoc in nature and have consequently had

[1] Youth Detention Population in Australia 2021, *Australian Institute of Health and Welfare* < https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2021/contents/summary>.

minimal impact. In fact, recent state and territory government approaches to youth crime have given rise to a reactive youth justice policy underpinned by a tough-on-crime-discourse and the politicized detention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. For example, in 2023, the Queensland Government's successful passed amendment to youth justice legislation, allowing children to be held in adult watch houses and inclusion of breach of bail as an offence.[2] These amendments override the Queensland Human Rights Act and facilitate the harmful hyper-incarceration practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. In addition, recent decisions to lower the age of criminal responsibility to 10 years in the Northern Territory and the Victorian Government's reneging on its promise to raise the age to 14 years old by 2027 have also brought this issue to the forefront.[3]

Thirty years on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to face a culture of over-policing and surveillance. This situation reflects deep-seated inequities in Australian society, stemming from the enduring impacts of ongoing colonisation and dispossession. Current judicial systems, which reflect the continued racialisation of health and justice systems, fail to address or recognise the complex health and social needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

We know that children aged 10 to 13 in the youth justice system are physically and neurodevelopmentally vulnerable with many significant additional neurodevelopmental delays and higher rates of pre-existing psychosocial trauma. Furthermore, for many First Nations children, state-inflicted incarceration has caused generations of trauma, a denial of connection to country and community and being forcibly removed from their families. These devastating consequences often lead to long-term inequalities in life experiences and in some cases their death.

The P4JH has long been a staunch advocate of this issue, with much of our campaign dedicated to addressing the impacts of racism within the health and justice system. We are deeply concerned by these drastic shifts in government approaches to addressing the over-incarceration of children and young people and remain wary of the lack of

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[2] 'Changes to Youth Justice Act and Regulation', *Queensland Government Department of Youth Justice* <https://desbt.qld.gov.au/youth-justice/our-department/our-legislation/changes-act>.
[3] 'Raising the Age of Criminal Responsibility to 14 years', *P4JH* <https://www.p4jh.org.au/media-release/raising-the-age-of-criminal-responsibility-to-14-years/>.

understanding of the disproportionate impacts it will have on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

C. The Commonwealth's international obligations in regard to youth justice including the rights of the child, freedom from torture and civil rights

Australia is a party to a number of different international conventions that impact on the treatment of young people including the:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- UN Rules for the Protection of Juvenile Deprived of their Liberty (Havana Rules)
- UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules)
- UNHRC Optional Protocol on to the Convention against Torture

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* is the main international human rights treaty on children rights. Australia ratified the CRC on 17 December 1990. Among many rights, the Convention requires that the 'best interests' of the child are primary considerations when making decisions that impact a child,[4] and that detention be used as a last resort for the shortest, most appropriate period of time.[5] Importantly, Australia maintains a reservation to Article 37(c) of the CRC, allowing it to keep juveniles in adult prisons were necessary for geographic or practical reasons.

Australia is also a party to the *United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* ('*ICCPR*'), which is the leading treaty protecting civil and political rights. Among many rights, it aims to ensure that people's inherent human rights safeguarded – particularly when deprived of liberty,[6] and prohibits torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment .[7]

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[4] *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,* art. 3(a).
[5] *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,* art. 37(a).
[6] *United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, art. 10(1).
[7] *United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, art 7.

The *United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment* ('*CAT*') and Optional Protocol to this Convention ('*OPCAT*') have also been ratified by Australia. Under Article 16 of the *CAT,* Australia is required to prevent other acts of TCID that do not amount to torture and such actions amounting to TCID should be criminalised under domestic law

Other key conventions include the *International Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)* which condemns any discrimination on the grounds of race and requires parties to pursue a policy of eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms through all appropriate means.[8] *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)* is also of particular relevance given the disproportionate incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in this country. The Declaration builds on core human rights by extending the understanding of such rights to First Nations peoples as a unique sub-national group. In particular, the UNDRIP establishes that Indigenous peoples have the right to practice their culture and shall enjoy fully all rights established under applicable international and domestic labor law.[9]

Australia also has soft law obligations under the *United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty* ('the *Havana Rules*') and the UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (Beijing Rules). Both rules provide additional guidance on the breadth and content of treaty obligations.

D. The degree of compliance and non-compliance by state, territory and federal prisons and detention centres with the human rights of children and young people in detention

Despite the overwhelming number of international obligations identified above, Australia's current approach to youth justice is in direct contravention of these obligations. The following section details the degree of compliance and non-compliance by state, territory and federal prisons and detention centres in relation to specific international obligations under the CRC and where relevant, other relevant conventions.

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[8] *International Convention on the Elimination on All Forms of Racial Discrimination,* art. 2(1).
[9] *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples,* art. 11 and art. 17.

(i) The 'Best Interests' of the Child

Article 3(1) of the CRC, requires that best interests of the child be a primary consideration in all decisions made by law enforcement agencies. This means that the child's welfare, safety, and developmental needs must be prioritised, particularly in decisions regarding detention. For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children this requires accommodation for their cultural background, traditions and personal beliefs and being sensitive to the cumulative risks of discrimination and marginalisation that they experience given their history and identity. Yet, in practice, youth justice systems in jurisdictions across Australia often fail to prioritise these factors, with little regard for their intersecting needs or the potential impact that detention may have on their long-term wellbeing.

Evidence before the 2017 Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory showed that racist language was an 'everyday thing' that was accepted as the broader culture of the facility. First Nations children were subject to racial slurs and oppressive conduct, including the prohibition of children speaking their native language. The Royal Commission also found that detention centre staff across Australia do not receive adequate training on how to culturally support First Nations children in detention. Additionally, the Royal Commission found that visits from their traditional elders and cultural activities were infrequent and ad hoc due to a lack of government funding and support.

Similar findings were also identified in Victoria through the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People's inquiry into the over-representation of Aboriginal children and young people in the Victorian youth justice system. The Report identified a lack of consistent approaches to ensuring First Nations children were able to maintain connections with their family and communities, with most contact with family inadequately planned. The inquiry also revealed that the youth justice system often failed to facilitate or support meaningful connections with culture for Aboriginal children and young people, including many instances where their case managers failed to prioritize their cultural needs through the establishment of a cultural support plan.

These findings also demonstrate that the failure to provide culturally safe support in the best interests of First Nations children in detention stems from a broader culture of racism and discrimination that is inherent in Australian society. Therefore, not only is this in

violation of Article 3(a) of the CRC, but it also indicates that prisons and detention centres are not in compliance with Article 2(1)(a) of the ICERD.

(ii) Detention as a last resort

Article 37(b) of the CRC requires that detention be used as a 'last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time'. This principle is central to a human rights approach to juvenile justice and recognises the inherent harm that can be caused to children spending extended periods in detention and the need for rehabilitative rather than punitive approaches to justice in this area.

However, this principle is routinely breached in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth detention. The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in detention, including the alarming rates of those on remand (i.e., detained while awaiting trial), clearly demonstrates that detention is not being used as a last resort. The excessive use of detention, particularly for minor or non-violent offenses, undermines the rehabilitative purpose that Article 37(b) promotes. Rather than focusing on rehabilitation, many of these children are exposed to environments that further stigmatise and criminalise them, exacerbating the likelihood of reoffending. The prolonged detention periods, even when a child is not yet convicted, contravene the principle that detention should be for the shortest appropriate period, highlighting the disparity between international human rights obligations and domestic practices.

E. Justice consistent with our international obligations

The P4JH believes that real justice that is consistent with our international obligations lies in shifting away from tough-on-crime approaches to youth justice and addressing the social and cultural determinants of incarceration.

There is a large body of research which demonstrates a correlation between socio-economic disadvantage and imprisonment. As articulated by the Australia Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA), who are also a member of the P4JH;

> "Incarceration rates are directly linked to the social determinants of health, which broadly refers to the circumstances in which people live, grow, work, and age. This can also include

> housing, employment, education, general access to services, and environmental factors."[10]

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people this is further compounded by cultural determinants such as identity, connections to family and community, kinship, language, culture and country which are informed by histories of colonisation and dispassion.[11]

For instance, according to Victoria Legal Aid, young people in out of home care are almost twice as likely to face criminal charges as those who remain with family.[12] In addition, a family history of incarceration is seen as a contributing factor to incarceration and is more prevalent among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrants.[13] It is also estimated that approximately 95% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples charged with criminal offences have an intellectual disability, cognitive impairment or psychosocial disability.[14] Previous groundbreaking research in 2018 has shown that more than one in three young people at Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre in WA had Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and nearly 90 per cent of those assessed had at least one form of severe neurodevelopmental impairment, most of which had not been previously diagnosed.[15]

In this context, incarceration should be seen as a product of shortcomings and barriers to these social and cultural determinants of health. There are several key structural reforms that are required to ensure approaches to youth justice are in the best interests of First nations children.

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[10] 'Incarceration: the disproportionate impacts facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', *Australian Indigenous Doctors Association* (2022), pg 1.
[11] 'Incarceration: the disproportionate impacts facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people', *Australian Indigenous Doctors Association* (2022), pg 1.
[12] Care not Custody – keeping kids in residential care out of the courts', *Victoria Legal Aid* < https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/node/9781#providing-care-not-custody>.
[13] "The Health of Australia's Prisoners 2018, Summary," Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/prisoners/health-australia-prisoners-2018/summary>.
[14] Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, December 2020, Overview of responses to the Criminal justice system Issues paper, p3.
[15] Bower C, Watkins RE, Mutch RC*, et al* Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and youth justice: a prevalence study among young people sentenced to detention in Western Australia *BMJ Open* 2018;**8:**e019605. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2017-019605.

(i) Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People with Disabilities

The lack of access to appropriate diagnoses and supports means many First Nations children with disabilities inevitably end up having contact with police, courts, juvenile detention and prison, increasing their changes of unemployment, housing insecurity and unequal health outcomes in the long term. Furthermore, according to P4JH member organisation, First Peoples Disability Network, gaps in NDIS services means that sometimes the only way that a young Aboriginal person can be housed is in prison.

Contact with the criminal justice system, can adversely impact the mental health of First Nations children, their families and their communities, and further exacerbate pre-existing disabilities and cognitive impairments. Incidences of self-harm and attempted suicide are more prevalent in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners compared to non-Indigenous, and this is consistent for both adults and young people.[16] In order to curb this issue, there is a need to ensure that our early childhood and school systems are culturally safe, trauma informed and include and awareness of and support for children with disability.

(ii) Justice Reinvestment

It is glaringly apparent that Australia's criminal justice system is disproportionately focused on punitive as opposed rehabilitative approaches to justice. The excessive employment of prolonged detention periods, mandatory detention and solitary confinement is harmful for all prisoners but is particularly damaging for First Nations children and children with disabilities.

In this light, there is a strong case for justice reinvestment initiatives that offer culturally safe alternative pathways to youth detention for Indigenous children with complex needs. Simply put, justice reinvestment broadly refers to the reallocation of funding that would typically go into the criminal justice system into community-based programs that address the underlying causes of crime and social justice. Rather than investing in the high costs of building and delivering detention-based services, investment directed towards prevention

[16] 'Justice Reinvestment in Australia: A Review of the Literature', *Matthew Willis* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 2018), pg 8 and 10.

and support of vulnerable children would reduce the trajectory of harmful lifelong enmeshment with the criminal justice system.[17]

Justice reinvestment initiatives have been successfully piloted in the United States and taken up in the United Kingdom, with several trials taking place in Australia in communities with high rates of incarceration and a high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Lowitja Institute, who are also a member of the P4JH have undertaken a comprehensive scoping review to determine the cultural responsiveness of justice reinvestment programs.[18] We encourage the Senate Committee to draw on this review when identifying potential future approaches to youth justice.

(iii) Access to Culturally Safe Health Care and the MBS in detention

As an alliance that regularly works within the intersections of health and justice, the P4JH is also concerned about the disparity in the delivery of health service to First Nations children in prison settings, compared to the general community. There is a lack of understanding about the complex health and wellbeing needs of First nations children and a lack of access to culturally safe health care in prisons.

There are two ways to remedy this issue. Firstly, P4JH urges the Federal Government to allow Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOS) to administer in prisons. Allowing ACCHOs to provide health care services to incarcerated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will ensure that these children have access to culturally safe health continuity of care both prior to, during and after incarceration. ACCHO staff hold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, a deep understanding of the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and are able to offer a high quality, holistic approach to healthcare which caters to the physical, emotional, spiritual and social needs of patients.

In the ACT, the implementation of the Winnunga Holistic Health Care Prison Model into ACT Health prison services is a best practice model in this space. The program was initiated in response to the construct of ACT's first prison and ensures that the ACCHO is

[17] Abramovitz, R., & Mingus, J. (2016). Unpacking racism, poverty, and trauma's impact on the school-to-prison pipeline. In A. J. Carten, A. B. Siskind, & M. P. Greene (Eds.), *Strategies for deconstructing racism in the health and human services* (pp. 245–265). Oxford University Press.

[18] Lorelle Holland et al., 'Resisting the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: A scoping review to determine the cultural responsiveness of diversion programs', *First Nations Health and Wellbeing: The Lowitja Journal* (2024).

responsible for the delivery of a holistic health care service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait youth in custodial settings.

Another keyway to ensure First Nations children have access to high quality health care in the justice system is through introducing Medicare into the prison healthcare system. At present, the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and Pharmaceutical benefits Scheme (PBS) are not available to people in prison or youth detention. 715 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Checks and follow-up items which are crucial to the provision of comprehensive and holistic care to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not available to incarcerated Indigenous youth. Instead, our young people receive instances of once-off care when they are in crisis. There is no preventative health care offered, and no attempt to treat underlying or ongoing conditions. The tragic death of 19-year-old Noongar Wirlomin man Stanley Inman Jr at Acacia Prison is just one example of this systemic failure.

Introducing Medicare into prisons would also make it feasible for ACCHOs to provide health services to prisons as they could bulk bill. In the ACT, the ACCHO-ACT Government partnership is reliant on ACT Government funding. Other states and territories have not entered into such arrangements.

Our existing prison health system further widens the existing health gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples. We join the calls of a growing cohort of health professionals who call for these services to be made availability within prisons immediately.

(iv) Raising the age of minimum criminal responsibility

Scientific evidence shows that children, especially under the age of 13, have not yet fully developed abstract thinking and reasoning skills, as well as their justice, morals, empathy, patience, tolerance and responsibility, with full brain development not achieved until the age of 25 years.[19] Therefore, justice supervision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is detrimental and leads to the child entering a cycle of trauma and retraumatisation.

[19] Amnesty International Australia, "A Brighter Tomorrow: Keeping Indigenous Kids in the Community and out of Detention in Australia." (Broadway: Amnesty International Australia, 2015), <https://www.amnesty.org.au/reportbrighter-tomorrow/>.

It is vital that the juvenile system work together with communities to stop this cycle of trauma and instill strength in young people's wellbeing, identity, and sense of purpose to protect again and divert from a future of crime. Consequently, P4JH strongly advocates for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to at least 14 years with no exception, in line with international standards. It is crucial we ensure that these vulnerable children are receiving additional health care and support, not being incarcerated in prison.