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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA MEDIA RELEASE

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Majority of Australians support raising the age: new research

Most Australians support raising the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to at least 14, according to research commissioned by Amnesty International Australia.

The current minimum age of criminal responsibility in all Australian jurisdictions is just 10 (the age of a child in year three in primary school), a fact only one in 10 Australians could identify.

In 2019 the Committee of the Rights of the child [recommended](#) Australia raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) to at least 14 in line with international standards. Australia also came in for criticism from the international community during the recent Universal Periodic Review where 31 countries recommended Australia address its treatment of Indigenous people and raise the age.

“The tough-on-crime rhetoric is a false economy - all the evidence shows that locking kids up doesn’t work,” Amnesty International Australia Indigenous Rights Lead, Nolan Hunter, said.

“Children who are locked up are three times more likely to reoffend. And there is a large and ever growing body of evidence to show that diversion programs are much more effective in tackling youth crime.

“We need to have the courage to make long-lasting systemic change, rather than knee jerk announcements which react to the angry mob, but do nothing to address the actual underlying issues.

“Piling on our most vulnerable children doesn’t address the root causes of offending. You can lock as many kids up as you like, the cycle will only continue.

“When we improve the situation of vulnerable kids, we improve our society as a whole.

“To not characterise this as an Indigenous issue is disingenuous at best; let’s be honest, the majority of kids in youth detention are Indigenous, so let’s start looking at the root causes of the problems that find our kids imprisoned at a rate of 25 times more often than their non-indigenous peers.

“If we raise the age, we give these kids a chance at happy, healthy lives free of the quicksand of the youth justice system.

“If our governments are serious about Closing the Gap targets, there’s no more simple legislative reform that has widespread community support, as well as the support of health and welfare experts around the world than raising the age.

“We commend the ACT government for acting to make this a legislative priority, and the other states and territories must follow their lead in making this vital reform.”

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**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact media@amnesty.org.au
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ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

Amnesty International is a global movement of 10 million people standing up for justice, freedom and equality. We work to free people unjustly jailed, bring torturers to justice and change oppressive laws. We shine a light on great wrongs by exposing the facts others try to suppress. We lobby governments, and the powerful to make sure they keep their promises and respect international law. Together, our voices challenge injustice and are powerful enough to change the world. www.amnesty.org.au



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