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**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA
MEDIA RELEASE**

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NT'S YOUTH JUSTICE PROPOSAL WINDS BACK DON DALE REFORMS

Amnesty International Australia is deeply concerned about proposed changes to the Northern Territory's youth justice system which turns its back on the reforms made following the 2017 Royal Commission.

"This is a callous, racist legislative crackdown in search of a problem," Amnesty International Australia Indigenous Rights Advocate Rodney Dillon said.

"Chief Minister Gunner has picked up the Royal Commission report and thrown it in the bin.

"Let's be clear: no one wants youth crime. But cracking down on Indigenous kids - because all the kids in the NT justice system are Indigenous - who have complex needs, by throwing them in jail fixes nothing.

"What it does is condemn young kids to the quicksand of the youth justice system, and it entrenches recidivism, which is what all the politicians say they want to address," Dillon said.

The [Australian Bureau of Statistics](#) found that there were 693 offenders aged between 10 and 17 years, a decrease of 9% from 2018–19.

"It's illogical, but more than that, it's not based on any evidence whatsoever. In fact, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, youth crime is on a downward trend across Australia, including in the Territory.

"We'd like the Gunner government to please show us the evidence that youth crime is rising. Anecdotes and perceptions don't equal evidence.

"Because we'd be more than happy to show them the evidence that sending kids to prison compounds disadvantage and offending behaviour."

"If the people of the Northern Territory really want long-lasting and systemic change to address youth offending, then raising the age of criminal responsibility is the only logical, moral and evidence-based solution.

"This government knows diversion and intervention programs work -- they have made good decisions to fund these programs across the Territory. These amendments are reactionary, political and wrong.

"Our society should be protecting and promoting the safety of children, and all the evidence shows that Indigenous and community-led justice reinvestment programs are what's effective for children in supporting them to lead healthy lives, free of the quicksand of the justice system."

At the very least this

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Amnesty International Media on +61 423 552 208 or media@amnesty.org.au

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