

Australian Council  
of Social Service



ACOSS Media Release



## Children under 14 belong in school and with their community not in prison

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**ACOSS strongly condemns the decision of the Meeting of Attorneys General to “support developing a proposal to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 including with regard to any carve outs, timing and discussion of implementation supports” as completely inadequate and failing to improve the lives of children and young people.**

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Data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare shows that this proposal would not change the situation for more than 90% of children under 14 in prison.

**ACOSS CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie said:**

“This is not even a decision, it’s plan to develop a plan that will do nothing to save hundreds of children under 14 from languishing behind bars.”

“It is baffling that our leading law-makers have ignored the medical evidence and the results of multiple inquiries recommending that the minimum age for criminal responsibility be at least 14 years old.

“Australia needs to follow the lead of the ACT and align with clear UN recommendations to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

“All the evidence tells us that children belong in school and with their families and communities, not in prison cells. Early and alternative supports, and resourced and appropriate services - in youth homelessness, in child protection, in mental health – for children and their families will deliver better outcomes for the child, their family and the wider community.”

First Nations children are grossly overrepresented in the justice system. Based on rates of detention per capita, First Nations children are locked up at 18 times the rate of other children.

"If the Federal Government is truly committed to Closing the Gap, it needs to show leadership on this crucial issue which is causing immense harm to the health, wellbeing and future of children," said Dr Goldie.

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To download headshots of ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie [click here](#).

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