

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Psychiatrists say the detention of children in adult prisons must stop

**26 August 2022** - The peak body of psychiatrists in Australia has called on the Federal and state and territory governments to stop the detention of children in adult prisons.

In light of the recent events at Banksia Hill Youth Detention Centre (WA), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) has staunchly opposed the detention of children in adult facilities and urged governments to prioritise the mental health of children detained in the juvenile system.

RANZCP President Vinay Lakra highlighted that research shows over 75 per cent of young persons in detention have one or more psychiatric disorders that need treatment.

“Youth detention is associated with increased risks of suicidality and psychiatric disorders including depression, substance use, and behavioural disorders. Detaining young children and putting their future at risk should be the absolute last resort.

“Young people in the justice system need early intervention to effectively treat mental disorders, reduce chances of illness-driven offending and recidivism, and build more functional pathways to schooling or employment. For the young people that are in the justice system, there is a dire need to improve the adequacy and quality of primary and specialist mental health services.

“Raising the age of criminal responsibility has been long overdue. The RANZCP will continue to advocate to increase the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years.”

RANZCP Western Australia Branch Chair Mike Verheggen urged the state government to develop modelling for growing demands of child and adolescent psychiatrists in rural, remote and metropolitan areas.

“The WA Government must identify and develop appropriate models of care for high-risk child and adolescent populations, especially the most vulnerable children in the justice system and child protection.

“The Government must investigate what is happening at Banksia Hill and instead of transferring teenagers exhibiting concerning signs of mental health conditions to adult prisons, look at immediate provision of specialist mental health services to those detained at the youth centre.”

For all other expert mental health information, visit [Your Health in Mind](#), the RANZCP's consumer health information website.

**ENQUIRIES:** For media enquiries or to arrange an interview, contact 0437 315 911

**The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists** is a membership organisation that prepares medical specialists in the field of psychiatry, supports and enhances clinical practice, advocates for people affected by mental illness and advises governments and other groups on mental health care. For information about our work, our members or our history, visit [www.ranzcp.org](http://www.ranzcp.org).

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