



4 May 2021

Statement

YOUTH JUSTICE REFORMS

The Children's Commissioner's key remit is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable children in the Northern Territory, along with promoting continuous improvement and innovation in the policies, practices and services which achieve this aim.

The proposed reforms announced by the NT Government on 23rd March and being introduced on an urgency basis this afternoon, will result in more children and young people in detention, in a jurisdiction that already locks up more children than any other in Australia. In addition, the proposed measures will disproportionately affect Aboriginal children and young people.

The OCC stands with the community groups, legal experts, Aboriginal organisations and the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ANZCCG) calling on the NT Government to reconsider this legislation, and continue to work collaboratively towards long term evidence based measures required to make our communities and children safer.

Quotes attributable to Commissioner Sievers:

'We know that national and international research has long established that best results for community safety are as few as possible children are held in detention. In particular when less children on remand in detention. In fact, research in the U.S. shows that when children are remanded in detention around a third go onto commit more serious crimes in the future'.

'Despite numerous requests, I have not been given the opportunity to meet with the Chief Minister or Police Minister, or to view the draft legislation. Accordingly, the OCC is unaware of how this legislation was developed, using what evidence base, or which experts and community members were consulted on the potential impact this legislation could have on the Territory's children'.

'Resorting to this regressive and expensive policy direction has the potential to doom future generations of Territory children to a life within the justice system. Evidence shows that place-based, child and family solutions will achieve far more positive results for our children and our communities'.

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