

In reply please quote: 564163/1, 2799148

Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Queensland Parliament
C/- Tabling Office
Bill and Papers
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write regarding the Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee (the Committee) Report No. 82 – *Inquiry on strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland* (the Report) which was tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 28 November 2014.

I provide this letter as the final response to the Report under section 107 of the *Parliament of Queensland Act 2001*. An interim response and reasons was tabled on 27 February 2015. The final response must be tabled by **Wednesday, 27 May 2015**.

The Queensland Government thanks the Committee for its hard work in undertaking the complex inquiry into measures to curb criminal activity, reduce rates of recidivism and to build a safer community for all Queenslanders. It acknowledges that the Committee received 85 public submissions and held 11 public hearings throughout the State. The Report makes 88 recommendations and presents a holistic approach to combating crime in Queensland.

A key focus in the Report is justice reinvestment and a whole-of-Government Crime Prevention Framework that recognises and addresses the common causes of crime. The need for robust data collection models to enable evidenced-based policy development and evaluation frameworks that ensure publicly-funded initiatives are cost-effective and achieve outcomes, is emphasised in the Report.

There is also a focus on the experience of vulnerable groups in the criminal justice system such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with cognitive impairment or disability, and ways to enhance community confidence in the criminal justice system.

The Government has made a number of commitments that align with the recommendations and/or themes of the Report. In particular, the Government has committed to:

- a referral to the Queensland Law Reform Commission to investigate alternatives to incarceration, including but not limited to justice reinvestment and court-ordered parole;
- a review of the Cabinet Handbook with a view to including a requirement for an Institutional Impact Statement to be included with Cabinet submissions, which outlines the impact on all State government institutions (which would include correctional facilities), likely to be impacted by proposed legislation;
- the reinstatement of the Sentencing Advisory Council in Queensland and the establishment of an independent crime statistical body to publish independent crime statistics for all criminal offending across Queensland;
- the reinstatement of diversionary processes, such as the Murri Court, the Special Circumstances Court and the Drug Court, as soon as is fiscally practicable; and to restore court-ordered youth justice conferencing;
- reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system, including through consideration of ways to introduce programs that were ceased and new programs to address this serious issue; and
- undertaking a comprehensive audit of all Queensland courts and tribunals with a view to providing appropriate resourcing of courthouses, with such an audit to include the existing provision of: soundproof interview rooms, access for mobility impaired persons, facilities to assist persons with disabilities, videoconferencing facilities; and consultation with stakeholders to ascertain how access to interpreter services in the justice system could be improved.

As part of its commitment to Keeping Our Community Safe, the Queensland Government is committed to tackling serious organised crime and will do so in a comprehensive way, with the advice of experts and after broad consultation. The Commission of Inquiry into Organised Crime commenced on 1 May 2015 and is headed by Michael Byrne QC. The Commission is looking into organised crime as a whole, including major illicit drug markets, networked online child sexual offending, financial crimes, money-laundering, cyber-crime, violence and other forms of organised crime.

A high-level taskforce is also being formed with representation from the Queensland Law Society, Bar Association Queensland, Queensland Police Union, the Queensland Police Service and Government agencies to review the legislation passed under the Liberal National Party (LNP) Government to target criminal motorcycle gangs, and to recommend replacement laws and develop a new serious organised crime offence.

As part of the Keeping our Community Safe commitment, the Government has also pledged to deliver improved safety equipment for police, including \$5 million for body-worn cameras; and to match the commitment of the former Government for more frontline police.

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In terms of young people, the former LNP Government significantly changed the philosophical approach to youth justice in Queensland. This Government has committed to repealing the 2014 amendments to the *Youth Justice Act 1992* to reinstate the position that: offender's identifying information cannot be published other than in exceptional circumstances; it is not an offence to breach bail; all lower Children's Court matters are to be conducted in closed court; childhood findings of guilt for which no conviction is recorded cannot be admitted in future sentence hearings when an adult; detention is a sentence of last resort (and the reinstatement of the principle under the *Penalties and Sentences Act 1992* for offenders aged 17 years and over as it existed before the 2014 amendments); and 17 year olds who have six months or more left to serve in detention are not automatically transferred into an adult correctional facility.

Further, the Government has committed to conducting an independent review of the Boot Camps model based on the collection of objective, empirical data, consultation with stakeholders and analysis of the effectiveness of similar type programs in operation.

Another strong theme in the Report is the need to address domestic and family violence and sexual violence. Seven of the 88 recommendations are directed specifically to the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland (the Special Taskforce), which was chaired by the Honourable Dame Quentin Bryce AD CVO. There are also a number of other recommendations of relevance to the work that was undertaken by the Special Taskforce.

On 28 February 2015, the Premier and Minister for Arts released the final report of the Special Taskforce titled, *Not Now, Not Ever – Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*, which makes 140 recommendation. The recommendations provide a framework to inform the creation of a Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy for Queensland, with the long term aim of eliminating this conduct in Queensland. The Queensland Government has committed to considering all of the recommendations made by the Special Taskforce.

This Government is committed to evidence-based policy-making and to the principles of integrity and accountability. The focus is on consensus and consultation as this Government moves Queensland beyond the divisiveness of the past three years.

Your assistance in having this letter tabled in the Legislative Assembly by **Wednesday, 27 May 2015** is greatly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

YVETTE D'ATH MP

Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and
Minister for Skills and Training.