

**MEDIA RELEASE: “A CHANCE FOR REAL CHANGE”
SOCIAL REINVESTMENT WA COALITION CELEBRATES WA GOV PUBLIC
COMMITMENT TO REVIEW YOUNG OFFENDERS ACT WITHIN 1 YEAR**

4th October 2022

KEY POINTS:

- Social Reinvestment WA welcomes Minister Bill Johnstone’s announcement of WA Government plan to review young offender laws within 12 months.
- A review of legislation and the Young Offenders Act was one of SRWA’s three Major Asks at the launch of our *Blueprint for a Better Future Report* in late August, and in the SRWA Open Letter from 75 organisations concerning children being sent to Unit 18 in July.
- Reviewing and reforming the Young Offender Act could be crucial to reducing incarceration and stopping the imprisonment of primary school aged children; Creating more effective rehabilitation and diversion options in the community, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people; And resolving the ongoing crises at Unit 18 and Banksia Hill.

Comments attributed to Glenda Kickett, Co-Chair of Social Reinvestment WA:

*“The announcement today to undertake a review of youth justice legislation is to be celebrated. Reform of the Young Offenders Act and legislation was one of our key asks as a coalition in July when the government announced the transfer of children to Casuarina maximum security adult prison, and again at the launch of our *Blueprint for a Better Future Report* in late August.*”

We are glad that this call has been heard, and hope is a turning point for government to deconstruct oppressive and ineffective systems and move away from decades of punitive approaches, towards solutions for our children and communities.”

Comments Attributed to Daniel Morrison, Co-Chair of Social Reinvestment WA:

“Reform of the Young Offenders Act which is now 28 years old, and our entire youth justice system is urgently needed, and we strongly welcome this commitment from Minister Johnstone today as a key first step.”

“SRWA want to see the governments consultations over the next year bring to the table the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders around the state, as well as the NGO and Aboriginal Community Controlled sector, who have been leading solutions in the community for many years.”

Comments attributed to Sophie Stewart, Social Reinvestment WA Manager:

“Reforming the Young Offenders Act opens the door to ending the outdated and cruel practice of incarcerating young children, 10, 11, 12, and 13 year old’s, to bring us in line with the rest of the world. It can empower services to use better diversion and rehabilitation supports at the first signs of trouble in a young person’s life, so incarceration is truly a last resort and offending doesn’t get the chance to escalate. It could enable us to respond to the unmet needs of struggling young people and their families so they can build better futures as part of our community.”

*“This is a significant and promising opportunity to reform parts of our failing youth justice system. A chance for real change. We hope SRWA’s *Blueprint for a Better Future report* will contribute some of the building blocks for a better system that supports young people to grow and thrive, and builds safer communities.”*

ENDS.