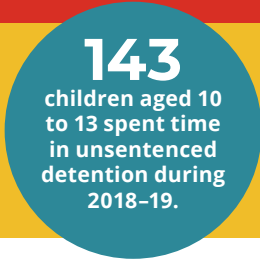


WA is sending children as young as 10 to prison. Here are the facts:

In Western Australia we send primary school aged children as young as 10 to prison.



Our justice system is filled with our communities most vulnerable children; who need care and support to thrive.



90% of children in Banksia Hill Detention Centre were found to have significant cognitive impairments, including Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).



72% of the young people incarcerated in Western Australia in 2019-20 were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young people, despite making up just 5% of the population.



50% of children in the criminal justice system in Australia have also been involved in the Child Protection System.

Why we need to raise the age to 14: The evidence



WA needs to meet International standards when it comes to safeguarding children.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended in 2019 that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be at least 14 years of age globally.



Scientific and medical evidence tells us we should raise the age to 14.

Overwhelming medical and scientific consensus suggests that children should not be held criminally responsible. Full cognitive function does not finish developing until people reach their early 20's.

Children and adolescents are incapable of fully comprehending the consequences of their actions. The Australian Medical Association and Royal College of Paediatricians both call for the MACR to be raised to at least 14 years.



Prison fails to rehabilitate and causes children long term harm.

Our juvenile detention system fails to effectively rehabilitate and reintegrate young people 55% of children in Banksia Hill in 2019/2020 had been imprisoned previously.

Children forced into contact with the criminal justice system are less likely to complete their education and are separated from the communities, further preventing them from develop and grow into thriving adults.

2017-18 Banksia Hill experienced at least an attempted suicide or self-harm once every two days in.



Juvenile detention is the most expensive option

It costs \$1,339 per day to detain one child in Banksia Hill in 2019-20, roughly equivalent to \$488,735 per child for one year.

In comparison, the most expensive boarding school in the world, Le Rosey in Switzerland, costs on average \$182,000 per year.

Youth-work-based programs have been proven to reduce youth recidivism by half, with an annual cost of just \$1,680 per person.

Sending a child to Banksia Hill is the most expensive form of youth justice. It is only \$93 a day for community-based supervision and/or diversion methods.

How do we **Raise the Age?**

We can immediately reform Western Australian legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years by amending section 29 of the Criminal Code (WA).

- Police already divert children under 10 to alternatives such as Department Communities.
- Improving socio-economic factors, such as increased household income, has been proven to be more effective in reducing crime, in comparison to harsher punishments.

We have an opportunity to improve the system – these children do not receive the support and care they need long before they have contact with the youth justice system.

We must focus on early identification, and adequately investing into evidence-based, targeted programs that respond to the social causes of crime.



Our focus should be on:

- Justice reinvestment, redirecting our resources to early intervention, prevention, diversion, and rehabilitation that resolves the underlying causes of offending.
- Collaboration for culturally secure programs designed by, with, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.
- Holistic support services that recognise and respond to the unique circumstances and complexity of vulnerable individual's experiences, engage the whole family, and can be accessed through 'no wrong door.'
- Placed-based programs co-designed with the communities they seek to engage.
- Ensuring our youth justice system is fair, transparent, and accountable.

There are programs that already work

Olabud Doogethu is a community designed and led justice reinvestment initiative supported by the Shire of Halls Creek. Its culturally secure Aboriginal Youth Engagement Night Officer Team saw a 58% reduction in burglaries, a 36% reduction in stolen vehicles, and a 28% reduction in stealing in their first year of operation.



Take action

Together, we can take a step forward to build safer communities, and a better future for Western Australia's most at-risk young people by raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old.

- 1 Sign the petition and sign up to our campaign
- 2 Listen to our Podcast Stories from the Inside Season 2
- 3 Follow and share on social media
- 4 Become a Raise the Age Champion in your local community

Find out more
[socialreinvestmentwa.org.au/
raise-the-age](https://socialreinvestmentwa.org.au/raise-the-age)

