

Why 14?



MEDICAL SCIENCE SHOWS CHILDREN ARE NOT COGNITIVELY CAPABLE SO THEY CANNOT BE CRIMINALLY CULPABLE

The medical evidence is clear that children have not experienced sufficient neurological development by 12 or 13 to have the capacity to form the type of criminal intention you need to be found criminally responsible, or to predict the reaction or consequence of an action before it occurs. Children under 14 years old do not have the cognitive capacity to form criminal intent. Medical Peak Bodies including the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of Physicians all call for the age to be raised to at least 14 as well as the Law Council of Australia.



14 IS THE MOST COMMON AGE AROUND THE WORLD AND WA IS LAGGING BEHIND

The most common age of criminal responsibility around the world is 14 (the median average.) WA is lagging behind countries including Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, Italy, Spain, Russia, and Sierra Leone. 14 is also the age recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.



THE EARLIER YOU 'CRIMINALISE', THE MORE LIKELY YOU ARE TO CAUSE A LIFETIME OF HARM

Research finds that early contact with the youth legal system increases the likelihood of:

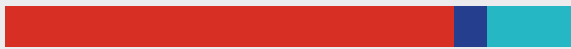
- Poor Future Justice Outcomes: being held on remand (in custody prior to trial or sentencing) rather than bailed; further offending; and potential life-long involvement with the youth legal system.
- Interruption to Education: Children in the criminal justice system are less likely to complete their education, and thus less likely to thrive into the future.
- Trauma and Mental Illness: Incarceration and criminalisation causes documented long term impacts on mental health, often compounding pre-existing trauma. There was a suicide of self-harm attempt every 2 days in Banksia Hill in 2017/18.

ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION ARE MORE COST EFFECTIVE

It would be cheaper and more effective to support every young child in juvenile detention with a one on youth worker 365 days a year than to incarcerate them in Banksia Hill.

COST COMPARISON YOUTH JUSTICE

	Juvenile Detention	Community Supervision	Youth Worker (One on One)
Avg. Cost Per Day	\$1339	\$93	\$282
Avg. Cost Per Year	\$488,735	\$33,945	\$102,766



IN WA THE AGE YOU CAN...

- Vote in an election : 18
- Drive a Car : 16
- Get your first Job : 13
- Get sent to prison : 10

CHILDREN VERY RARELY COMMIT SERIOUS CRIMES

The majority of crimes (about 55 per cent) committed by juveniles are theft, burglary and property related crimes. Other crimes include public order, drugs and traffic offences, and fraud. Just over 20 per cent are acts intended to cause injury. Very serious offences (such as homicide and sexual offences) are rarely perpetrated by juveniles, and very rarely by extremely young children under the age of 14.

We have an opportunity to change the lives of hundreds of WA's children and their families. By raising the age to at least 14, and providing interventions and support instead of juvenile detention, we can give these young people a chance to thrive and grow to their full potential. Young people need help not harm. Primary school children do not belong in prison.

