Our network

NII



POLITICS QUEENSLAND JUSTICE

Removal of 17-year-old prisoners from Queensland adult jails delayed

By Felicity Caldwell

12 February 2018 – 10:05pm

A
A
A

Attempts to shift 17-year-olds out of Queensland's adult prisons into youth detention centres have been delayed, prompting criticism from advocates that the "11th hour" decision will leave children languishing in—adult jails.

Long-awaited reforms to youth justice take effect on Monday, meaning 17-year-olds charged from now to be dealt with in the youth justice system.



Wolston Correctional Centre in Brisbane.

Photo: Grea Henderson Photography

But new Child Safety Minister Di Farmer revealed capacity constraints meant the process of moving teens already in adult prisons to youth detention centres would be delayed.

"Modelling that we've seen to date indicated that we did have sufficient capacity in the youth detention centres, however, I do not feel confident that this is now the case," she said.

"Seventeen-year-olds currently in prison will stay in the adult prison until the director-general of my department determines that it is appropriate to do so and safe to do so."



Former police commissioner Bob Atkinson will oversee the final implementation of the government's youth justice reforms.

"My sense of it already is that this is a very wise and sensible course of action," he said.

Ms Farmer could not say how long the move would be delayed.

"What I've asked Mr Atkinson to do is to look at the processes we have in place at the moment to see if they are robust and they have integrity and Mr Atkinson is going to advise me on when is the right time to begin transferring eligible young people over to the youth detention centres," she said.

"It will take however long it takes to get this right."

Asked whether she knew how much extra capacity was needed in youth detention centres, Ms Farmer said: "That's why I've asked Mr Atkinson to have a look at [it]."

"I want to be confident about numbers and when he advises me, I will make decisions about the transfer of the young people to the detention centres."

There are 61 17-year-olds in adult prisons this week, who are on remand or serving sentences.

Of those, 35 would be potentially eligible to transfer to youth detention.

There were 48 17-year-olds in the state's adult prisons when the Palaszczuk government announced the legislative changes in September 2016.

The move was a 2015 election promise from Labor and came in the wake of footage that emerged of a 17-year-old detainee being placed in a helmet.

The LNP has for months questioned whether there was sufficient capacity in Queensland's youth detention centres to accommodate the additional 17-year-olds.

Ms Farmer said the government had already delivered upgrades at youth detention centres, trained 98 additional staff.

Mr Atkinson will also advise on recommendations related to youth detention stemming from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Abuse.

The 2017-18 budget included \$199.6 million over four years to transition 17-year-olds from Queensland's adult justice system into the youth justice system.

Queensland was the only state in Australia to hold 17-year-olds in adult prisons.

Community Legal Centres Queensland director James Farrell said children did not belong in adult prisons, and described the "11th hour announcement" of the delay as disappointing.

"It's unsafe, and goes against everything we know about 'what works' to address youth offending," he said.

"Queensland and Australia face regular international criticism for this regressive practice, and urgent change is required.

"We've had decades to get this right, and had hoped that changes would come into force today.

"Sadly, today's announcement means that children will be left to languish in adult prisons again tonight."

LNP leader Deb Frecklington said the transfer of 17-year-olds was supposed to happen in November last year.

"Staff have been raising concerns over the transition plan for several months," she said.



Di Farmer. Photo: Chris Hyde

RELATED ARTICLE



 $Queensland\ crossbench\ considers\ youth\ justice\ law$



DK 3 HOURS AGO

So why the surprise? 25 years of the ALP saying they would do something and not delivering has led to 25 years of labor...

Speedmeister 9 HOURS AGO

Typical Labor, announce bold initiative, have no plan or means to fund it, run around like chickens with their heads cu...

View all comments



Felicity Caldwell

t y

Felicity Caldwell is state political reporter at the Brisbane Times

MORNING & AFTERNOON NEWSLETTER
Delivered Mon-Fri.

Your email address

SIGN UP

Sponsored by Palo Alto Networks





Best-selling art from renowned Australian and international artists

thestore com au

JOBS BY @adzuna

Dental Assistant Full TimePrime Practice
Alderley, Brisbane

Receptionist & Concierge ... Brisbane, Brisbane Region Customer Value Consultar Brisbane, Brisbane Region



Every Inh Everywhere

RECOMMENDED



POLITICS

Ousted Labor senator Sam Dastyari weighs in to Barnaby Joyce scandal



Why you could start a farm as little as 200m from the Brisbane CBD



Tingalpa, Geebung, Keperra best Brisbane suburbs for first-home buyers in 2018



apowered by plista

LIFESTYLE

How Barnaby Joyce became every woman's worst nightmare

MOZO

Looking for Your First Home Loan?



The Jaguar Unleashed Event is now on



NEDS.COM.AU

Bet With The New Champ! Deposit \$20 Get \$100 Bonus Bets. T&Cs Apply.



CARNIVAL CRUISES

What type of food will you find on a cruise?



THE MOTLEY FOOL

"Next Steve Jobs" Bets \$100B Jackpot on New Technology

HONG KONG TOURISM

Hidden secrets of Hong Kong revealed





COMPARE & SAVE



OUR SITES Brisbane Times The Age The Sydney Morning Herald The Canberra Times WA Today The Australian Financial Review Domain Traveller Executive Style The Store by Fairfax Drive Adzuna RSVP Essential Baby Weatherzone CLASSIFIEDS Commercial Real Estate Oneflare Nabo BRISBANE TIMES Contact & support Advertise with us Newsletters Accessibility guide Sitemap FAIRFAX MEDIA Photo sales Fairfax syndication Fairfax events Fairfax careers Conditions of use Privacy policy Press Council

Copyright © 2018

Fairfax