



17 September 2018

Youth Justice Strategy
Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
Locked Bag 3405
Brisbane QLD 4001

By email only: YJStrategy@csw.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Role of community legal centres in youth justice system

Community Legal Centres Queensland welcomes the development of a youth justice strategy by the Queensland Government. We understand the strategy will build on the findings of the Atkinson Report on Youth Justice, and reflect contemporary research and evidence about what works to prevent youth crime and reduce reoffending.

Unfortunately, the Atkinson Report did not recognise the important role played by Queensland's community legal centres in the youth justice system.

Community Legal Centres Queensland is the state peak body that provides support and advocacy for the 33 independent, not-for-profit community legal centres operating across Queensland. For over forty years, Queensland's community legal centres have provided efficient, effective and impactful legal help to everyday Queenslanders, focusing on the needs of the most marginalized and disadvantaged people in our community.

In 2017-18, Queensland's community legal centres provided legal help to 4,533 clients aged 24 and under; over 1,000 of these clients were aged under 18. Three of our member organisations provide specialist services to children and young people:

- The **Youth Advocacy Centre ('YAC')** offers free legal services, youth support and family support assistance and services to young people generally 10 to 18 years (inclusive) particularly those who are involved in, or are at risk of involvement in, the youth justice and/or the child protection systems, and/or are homeless or at risk of homelessness and live in or around the greater Brisbane region.
- **YFS Legal** provides legal advice and court representation in criminal matters (and other areas) for young people aged 10 to 24 years old with a focus on young people in the Youth Justice System. The advice and court representation are for young people within the Logan City and immediate surrounding areas and who are financially disadvantaged.
- **South West Brisbane Community Legal Centre** has dedicated youth lawyers with a wealth of experience in assisting youths with legal problems. They provide free representation and advice to persons under the age of 18 experiencing legal issues including youth justice or criminal law, school exclusion and child protection

These services are funded by state and commonwealth Governments, administered by Legal Aid Queensland, although we note that the Department of Communities, Disability Services and Seniors also provides funding to community legal centres for specialist legal services (for older Queenslanders).

We hope that the youth justice strategy will recognise the valuable contribution community legal centres play in supporting vulnerable young people and their families. If you require any further information, please contact:

- **Janet Wight**, YAC Director on (07) 3356 1002 or janet@yac.net.au
- **Jonathan Ward**, Director at South West Brisbane Community Legal Centre, on (07) 3372 7677 or Jonathan.Ward@communitylegal.org.au
- **Natasha Pettit**, YFS Legal Principal Solicitor on (07) 3826 1500 or natashap@yfs.org.au

Yours sincerely



James Farrell OAM

Director

Community Legal Centres Queensland Inc.