

The Chair
Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group
c/- Strategic Reform Division
Department of Justice
GPO Box F317
PERTH WA 6841



To the Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group

**COUNCIL OF ATTORNEYS-GENERAL – AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY WORKING GROUP
REVIEW**

I write to you today in my capacity as the Chief Executive Officer of the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia (YACWA), to express my utmost support for raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years old in Western Australia and across the nation.

To support this view, please find **attached** YACWA's submission to the Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group ('the Working Group'), detailing the robust evidence available supporting alternative approaches to justice for young people aged 10 to 14.


Children and young people who are exposed to the justice system are some of the most vulnerable members of our society. We know that our existing system of criminalisation and detention has a significantly negative impact of the life trajectory of young people, increasing their likelihood to reoffend, engage in alcohol and other drug use, and disengage from education. The evidence base for these negative effects on young people aged 14 and under is incontrovertible.

In order to protect the wellbeing of vulnerable young people in Western Australia—and across the nation—we must prioritise alternatives to sentencing and detention, including prevention, early-intervention, and diversionary responses, to provide children and young people opportunities to break cycles of disadvantage. At every stage, these responses must utilise trauma-informed approaches, and culturally safe frameworks.

This review is a critical opportunity for governments across the nation to make a genuine and impactful commitment to improving outcomes for current and future generations of children and young people in Australia.

For the safety and wellbeing of our nation's young people, I ask that the Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group support an increase to the minimum age of criminal responsibility and bring Australia in line with international best practice.

Yours Faithfully,



Ross Wortham

Chief Executive Officer

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T: (08) 9227 5440
T: 1800 670 231 (Regional)
E: yacwa@yacwa.org.au

**THE YOUTH AFFAIRS COUNCIL
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**
PO Box 334 Leederville WA 6903

Facebook: facebook.com/yacwa
Twitter: twitter.com/yacwa
YouTube: youtube.com/yacwa