

Youth justice: key information

This pack provides key information on youth justice in Queensland and, importantly, the services, support and programs available to young people, families, our communities and victims of crime.

The Queensland Government is committed to keeping our community safe and supporting victims, actively tackling the complex causes of youth crime and targeting serious repeat offenders (SROs).

For further information and to connect with services and programs, visit desbt.qld.gov.au/youth-justice

KEY FACTS

- There are over 557,000 10–17-year-olds in Queensland
- In 2022–23, there were 40,754 proven offences committed by 3,260 individual young people (0.585% of young people)
- The number of 10–16-year-old young people who commit offences has decreased by 35% in the past 10 years
- The number of 10–17-year-old young people who commit offences has decreased by 30% in the past five years
- Over 40% of 10–17-year-old young people who commit offences don't return to the youth justice system after their first finalised court appearance

Infrastructure

- Youth detention centre capacity increased from 212 to 306 since 2015, with two new therapeutic detention centres in planning

Workforce

- 69% increase in youth justice workforce since 2015–16

Strengthened Legislation

- Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023 to target the small number of serious repeat offenders

Transition of 17-year-olds into youth justice

- Legislation brought Queensland into line with the United Nations Convention and the law in all other Australian jurisdictions

Increased support for young people

- Helping young people access NDIS
- Finding homes
- Addressing school exclusions

Focus on serious repeat offenders

- Introduction of 24/7 services
- Intensive supports for families

Increased Engagement

- Working with other agencies to prevent entry into youth justice system
- Working with other agencies to prevent entry into youth justice system, and to build new trajectories for those young people with a history of offending behaviour

First Nations

- 195 young people supported by the On Country program in 2022–23



PROGRAMS FOR QUEENSLANDERS

Across several departments, programs are working to ensure community safety through prevention, disruption of crime and prosecution.

Initiatives and services are also in place from the early years right through to adulthood including engagement with education, child health support, drug diversion programs, housing support and training pathways.

| PROGRAM | DESCRIPTION | LOCATION |
|---|--|--|
| Bail Support | Bail support is delivered by non-government organisations to assist young people at risk of being remanded in custody by providing support to ensure they meet bail conditions. Organisations provide basic needs and connect young people to housing, education, health and family support to reduce offending. | South East Queensland (multiple services), Hervey Bay, Mackay, Bundaberg, Rockhampton, Cairns, Townsville, Mt Isa, Cherbourg and Toowoomba |
| Big Bounce | The Big Bounce Initiative provides a combination of diversionary programs to youths at risk of offending and rehabilitation programs to youths exiting detention. | Brisbane, Logan and Ipswich |
| Conditional Bail Program | Supports at-risk young people to increase their ability to remain in the community while their matters are before the courts. Programs address educational and vocational needs, mental health issues, family intervention and accommodation. Programs give the court confidence that children will receive individualised and intensive supervision while they are on bail. Recent enhancements allow the program to deliver additional hours of supervision on weekends and at night for young people under a Conditional Bail program. | Statewide |
| Community Youth Response and Diversion | This multi-faceted approach comprises diversion services with afterhours support, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural mentoring, bridging to education programs, and intensive case management for young people aged 10–15 years at high risk of offending or re-offending. | Brisbane, Gold Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Cairns, and Townsville |
| Early Action Groups | Currently operating in Townsville with early positive outcomes, Early Action Groups bring together Queensland Police and other key government representatives to provide intensive coordination of services and support to young people aged 8–16 years who are at moderate to high risk of falling into a cycle of crime and their families, providing wrap-around services tailored to the young person’s needs and risks. These services provide early intervention responses that address the factors contributing to young people’s offending behaviour, including family functioning, educational disengagement, substance use, negative peers and pro-criminal attitudes. Early Action Groups commenced operating in Cairns and Mt Isa in August 2023. | Townsville, Mt Isa and Cairns |
| Electronic Monitoring | Electronic monitoring is being offered as an option to courts through a trial in five locations. Electronic monitoring devices (EMDs), which are GPS enabled, may be fitted to suitable young people as a component of bail conditions. The provisions are designed to protect community safety and are imposed on young people who are eligible, including those, charged with ‘prescribed indictable offences’, who would benefit from more intensive bail conditions. The EMDs are monitored by Queensland Corrective Services, with Queensland Police Service responsible for fitting and compliance, and the Department of Youth Justice, Employment, Small Business and Training providing support and supervision to young people who are fitted with the devices through co-responder and intensive bail support programs. The expansion of Electronic Monitoring to 15-year-olds commenced 23 March 2023. | Trials in Townsville, Logan, Moreton, North Brisbane, Gold Coast, Cairns, Toowoomba and Mount Isa |
| Family-led Decision Making (FLDM) | This initiative addresses challenges and disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people engaged in the youth justice system. FLDM focuses on building family skills and resilience by inviting families and community to problem solve, lead discussions, and make decisions as the cultural authority for their young people. | Cairns, Toowoomba, Brisbane South/Logan and North Brisbane |

| PROGRAM | DESCRIPTION | LOCATION |
|--|---|---|
| Fast Track Sentencing | <p>This program supports finalisation of Children’s Court matters faster so young people spend less time on remand. Funding to support an additional location (Brisbane) and pilot trial locations Gold Coast (Southport), Cairns and Townsville. The intent is to address delays in finalising court matters.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: Fast track sentencing commenced on 1 March 2023 in Cairns, Townsville, Southport, and Brisbane Children’s Court, with 459 matters having been case-conferenced since commencement of the pilot, and case conferencing resolving the matter on 88% of occasions, without requiring a full brief of evidence.</p> | Brisbane, Gold Coast (Southport), Cairns and Townsville |
| Helping Seniors Secure their Homes Initiative | <p>A program designed to helping eligible homeowners aged 60 and over to secure their home by providing financial assistance of up to \$10,000 for the installation of security measures.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: As at 30 June 2023, 1,066 households were assessed as being eligible and referred to service providers. This includes 24 in Mount Isa, 349 in Townsville and 693 in Cairns. Quotes to the value of \$1.6 million were received, assessed, and approved for installation including \$487,567 in Mount Isa; \$738,844 in Townsville; and \$388,995 in Cairns. Actual total expenditure was \$1.2M.</p> | Townsville, Mount Isa, Cairns, Toowoomba, Tablelands and Mareeba Local Government Areas |
| Intensive Bail Initiative (IBI) | <p>Delivered by non-government organisations—intensive support is provided to high-risk young people on bail and their families and provides practical assistance to aid young people’s compliance with bail.</p> | Brisbane North, Caboolture/Redcliffe, Gold Coast, Logan, and Townsville, and expand to Cairns, Mount Isa and Toowoomba |
| Intensive Case Management (ICM) | <p>Intensive case management targets chronic young offenders aged 10–17 years, and their families, to help break the cycle of crime. It aims to reduce the frequency and severity of offending by addressing risk and encouraging pro-social decision-making and behaviour by the young person and their family. This program provides targeted intervention to address multiple factors that impact chronic juvenile offending, including substance abuse, and aims to enhance family and kinship connections and promote engagement in education and training.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: In 2022–23, ICM supported 163 young people and their families statewide, of which 114 (70%) were serious repeat offenders. Evaluation of the program found a 51% reduction in offending, frequency and a 72% reduction in proportion of crimes against the person.</p> | Brisbane (North and South), Caboolture/Moreton, Cairns, Gold Coast, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Logan, Mt Isa, Redcliffe, Rockhampton, Tablelands and Cassowary Coast, Toowoomba, Townsville (North and South) and Western Districts |
| Johnathan Thurston Academy’s JYouGotThis | <p>The JYouGotThis program has been designed to engage young people in pro-social activities to: build their confidence and connection to community; address anti-social and/or offending behaviour; build confidence and personal independence; and prevent subsequent offending. This program includes goal setting, mentoring, cultural engagement and post-program support.</p> | Cairns, Townsville and Mt Isa (coming soon) |
| Midnight Basketball | <p>Midnight Basketball welcomes everyone. Communities come together to provide high energy, fun, pro-social, inclusive, healthy, safe, motivating, and free tournaments in local basketball stadiums. Cairns Basketball is continuing to coordinate and facilitate Midnight Basketball with ongoing work for funding governance.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: Each session has between 150–240 children in attendance. From 8 July 2022 to 10 June 2023, 44 sessions were held, with 2,909 total participants.</p> | Cairns |
| Mt Isa Transitional Hub | <p>The hub provides culturally appropriate support to young people and their families and aims to keep young people out of custody. It also provides after-hours, community integrated and culturally safe diversion response for young people who are at risk of offending and entering the youth justice system.</p> | Mt Isa |
| Multi-agency Collaborative Panels | <p>The Multi-agency Collaborative Panels involve relevant government and non-government organisations who work together to coordinate service delivery and address systemic barriers that contribute to high-risk young people’s offending, including young people engaged in serious repeat offending.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: There are 18 Multi-agency Collaborative Panels (MACPs) operating across the State. MACPs ensure a collaborative response to the needs of young offenders through a multi-agency and multi-disciplinary approach. Agencies on the MACPs include Youth Justice, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Corrective Services, Housing, Child Safety, Queensland Health, and the Department of Education.</p> | Brisbane, Caboolture, Cairns, Darling Downs, Gold Coast, Ipswich, Logan, Mackay, Mareeba, Mt Isa, Rockhampton, Southwest Queensland, Sunshine Coast, Townsville, Wandama, Western Districts and Wide Bay Burnett |

| PROGRAM | DESCRIPTION | LOCATION |
|---|--|---|
| On Country | <p>Culture-based rehabilitation for young First Nations peoples under the supervision of senior First Nations leaders. This unique community-led program aims to reduce ongoing offending, using cultural immersion and experiences to address the motivation and pre-contemplative behaviour of young people who commit crime under the one-on-one mentorship of First Nations adult mentors, Elders and Traditional Owners.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: For the financial 2022–23, there were 2,255 instances of contact, involving 195 young people, with a total of 133 referrals to the On Country program. Of the 195 young people who were supported through the program, 116 have exited the program with the remaining young people currently undertaking programs.</p> | Cairns and Townsville |
| Project Booyah | <p>Project Booyah is a Queensland Police, Youth Mentoring Program that utilises adventure-based learning, leadership skills, decision-making/problem-solving exercises, resilience training, policing strategies and family inclusive principles to help young people aged 14–17 years make better life choices.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: Project Booyah expanded to Toowoomba in the second half of 2023, with recruitment beginning in September 2023. First participants will commence in early 2024.</p> | Logan, Gold Coast, Ipswich, South Brisbane, Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Townsville, Mackay and Rockhampton (and surrounding areas) |
| Restorative Justice Conferencing | <p>A justice process to deal with offences committed by a child or young person and to divert them away from the courts. Meetings are facilitated between the young person and the victim to discuss what happened, the effects of the crime and how the harm caused can be repaired.</p> | Statewide |
| Taskforce Guardian (joint initiative with QPS) | <p>A team of expert youth justice workers is partnering with the Queensland Police Service to target high-risk youth offending by providing temporary, additional resourcing in youth crime hotspots across the state. The squad works with key agencies on the ground including health, education, disability services and First Nations organisations.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: To 30 June 2023, police have charged 77 young persons with 261 charges. Of these, 28 young persons have had proceedings commenced by way of diversionary measures.</p> | Statewide |
| Townsville High Risk Court | <p>Established in 2017 as part of the Townsville Community Youth Response, the Townsville High Risk Court deals with young repeat offenders. The Court's sentencing options will ensure young offenders give back to the community, will prioritise sentencing options that ensure young people are giving back to the community.</p> | Townsville |
| Townsville Street University | <p>The Townsville Street University, delivered by the Ted Noffs Foundation, will provide a safe space for young people aged 12–25 years to engage in vocational and educational workshops, drug and alcohol treatment services, life skills training and mentoring, with pathways to further education. The program will work collaboratively with a range of existing services including the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups and Elders. The initiative will target young people involved in the youth justice system, however, other young people may also access the service.</p> | Townsville |
| Transition to Success (T2S) | <p>T2S aims to reduce and prevent re-offending for young people involved in or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. It is a vocational training and therapeutic service, with voluntary participation. The service builds partnerships with local community organisations to deliver flexible and tailored programs.</p> <p>HIGHLIGHTS: 50% of young people who completed a T2S course in the 12 months to 31 May 2022 did not reoffend in the following 12 months. 48% of young people completing T2S transition to further education or employment, including traineeships or apprenticeships.</p> | Gold Coast, Mt Isa, Cairns, Moreton, Cherbourg, Brisbane South, Brisbane North, Toowoomba, Mackay, Mareeba, Aurukun, Bundaberg, Townsville, Western Districts, Hervey Bay, Ipswich, Logan, Rockhampton, Caboolture and Sunshine Coast |

| PROGRAM | DESCRIPTION | LOCATION |
|---|--|--|
| Queensland Youth Partnership Initiative | This program targets young people engaging in anti-social behaviour in busy Queensland shopping centres. It aims to promote community safety and prevent nuisance behaviour and crime by diverting young people into other activities. | Brisbane North, North Lakes, Gold Coast, Rockhampton and Toowoomba |
| Youth Co-responder Teams and Youth Justice After Hours Expansion | Youth Co-responder Teams are dedicated teams of police and youth justice staff who patrol the streets, including after hours, and engage with young people at risk of offending and young people on bail. The program also links to partner agencies and the NGO sector for engagement with young people to provide a coordinated response and support to families. HIGHLIGHTS: Toowoomba and Mt Isa teams commenced in May 2023, Fraser Coast in June 2023 and Ipswich and South Brisbane in July 2023. Since commencement in 2020, the Youth Co-responder Teams have had over 71,000 interactions. | Townsville, Cairns, Mackay, Rockhampton, Moreton, Brisbane North, Logan, Gold Coast, Mt Isa, Toowoomba, Ipswich, South Brisbane and Fraser Coast |
| Youth Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service | This program aims to help reduce the impact of drugs and alcohol as a factor contributing to offending. The service will deliver a physically and psychologically safe place for young offenders whilst addressing criminogenic factors. The service will provide a 10-bed residential facility, in South East Queensland, providing 3 months residential treatment, as well as up to three years follow up treatment. | Caboolture |
| Youth Justice Crime Prevention Grants | Youth Justice Crime Prevention Grants are being offered in local communities across Queensland to identify, design and deliver programs and services that respond to the causes of youth crime, based on identified local needs and service system gaps. | Statewide |

Reform of the system

The youth justice system plays a crucial role in shaping the lives of young offenders and ensuring their successful reintegration into society. By implementing effective reforms, the government can address the underlying issues that contribute to youth offending and provide young people with the necessary support and guidance to turn their lives around.

Since 2015, the government has delivered on major youth justice system reforms:

- 2015 – reinstated Restorative Justice Conferencing and abolished boot camps
- 2018 – introduced 17 years into the youth justice system
- 2019 – introduced the Youth Justice Strategy
- 2020 – legislative amendments to bail decision-making laws
- 2021 – further strengthened bail laws and made serious repeat offenders accountable for their actions—a presumption against bail for serious repeat offenders, assurances from parents or guardians and a trial of electronic monitoring devices for high-risk repeat offenders
- 2022 – Government announced a 10-point action plan to address serious repeat offenders and further protect the community
- 2023 – further legislative amendments—*The Strengthening Community Safety Act 2023* varied the *Bail Act 1980*, *Youth Justice Act 1992* and *Criminal Code 1899* to target the small number of serious repeat offenders, who make up only 20% of the youth justice cohort but commit 55% of all offences committed by young people.

Legislative reforms

(at 31 October 2023)

40 serious repeat offender declarations made since legislative reforms commenced on 23 March 2023.

1,639 child defendants have been charged with the new Breach of Bail offence, for a total of 4,099 charges laid since amendments to the Bail Act 1980 came into effect in March 2023.

There were 79 conditional release orders longer than three months.

1,558 charges containing one of the new UUMV circumstances of aggravation, with 93.3% of offenders convicted.

93 young people have been charged with publishing details of offending on social media.

Custodial services

The government has recognised the need to plan for future detention centre infrastructure that considers population growth, changes in the profile of youth offenders and contemporary approaches to detention with two new therapeutic centres being built for 2026.

Investment and evaluation

Government investment in youth justice is crucial for the wellbeing of society as a whole. Since 2015 to 2023–24, the government has invested \$1.4 billion in whole-of-government funding for youth justice initiatives.

The 2023–24 Queensland Budget provided \$446.4 million investment over five years, including:

- \$37 million for targeting serious repeat offenders
- \$267.5 million for tackling the complex causes of youth crime
- \$132 million for boosting police resources and supporting community safety
- \$10 million to support a comprehensive independent evaluation of the government's youth justice response.

As a matter of practice, the department continues to review our suite of programs on an ongoing basis through contract management of services, departmentally-driven operational performance reviews, use of Multi-agency Collaborative Panels and through case work at a local level.

The department will continue to fund programs and services that the evidence tells us is effective in reducing reoffending and increasing community safety.

Where evaluation indicates the programs and services are not effective, the department will stop them.

The Queensland Audit Office (QAO) is also conducting a comprehensive audit with a focus on programs and services delivered to high-risk and serious repeat offenders.

The government has already reviewed a number of youth justice programs with recent evaluations indicating promising results:

- Intensive Case Management – 51% reduction in offending frequency and 72% reduction in proportion of crimes against the person
- Bail Support – a 32% reduction in reoffending frequency six months following the program.

Youth Justice Update

\$1.4B INVESTED SINCE 2015

Investment of \$446.4m over five years to:



Keep community safe



Tackle complex causes of youth crime



Target serious repeat offenders



Support for victims

On an average day in youth justice there are

306

Young people in custody (in 2022–23)

1,509

Supervised by Youth Justice (in 2022–23)

1,204

Young people supervised in the community (in 2022–23)

457

Serious repeat offenders (in 2022–23)

Key statistics from 2018–19 to 2022–23



30%

decrease
4,643 to 3,260
distinct young people with a proven offence



26%

decrease
6,231 to 4,584
distinct number of young people appearing in court



64%

increase
278 to 457
average daily number of serious repeat offenders



29%

decrease
2,417 to 1,725
the number of proven finalised drug offences



21%

decrease
4,014 to 3,180
total admissions to supervised youth justice order



28%

increase
58% to 74%
proportion of detention centre nights consumed by serious repeat offenders



Supervised in the community
1,642 to 1,204

Average daily number of young people since 2018–19



Supervised in custody
249 to 306

About young offenders

20% (656) of the youth justice cohort are committing 55% (22,250) of all offences committed by young people

59% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

45% disengaged from education/employment/training



27%

have one or more disabilities



27%

have one or more mental health disorders



14%

have one or more behavioural disorders



53%

have been impacted by domestic and family violence



30%

were in unstable and/or unsuitable accommodation

Program highlights

Keep the community safe

\$ 132 million

for boosting police resources and supporting community safety

20,000

Car engine immobilisers are expected to be installed across the trial areas Mt Isa, Cairns and Townsville

Youth Crime Taskforce

in place to improve integration of government and non-government agencies delivering services within the youth justice system led by Acting Assistant Commissioner, George Marchesini

2

new therapeutic youth detention facilities to be built which will increase bed capacity by **120**, from **306** to **426**

\$1.95 million

assessed and approved for the **Secure Housing fund** including **\$487,567** in **Mount Isa**; **\$738,844** in **Townsville**; and **\$731,562** in **Cairns**. **1,359** eligible applications received from **Mount Isa (24)**, **Townsville (477)** and in **Cairns (858)**

Tackle the complex causes of youth crime



+65,000

interactions by our Youth Co-responder teams—a 24/7 service



51%

decrease intensive case management in offending frequency



72%

decrease in proportion of crimes against the person



32%

decrease in reoffending frequency six months following the Bail Support

Target serious repeat offenders

The average daily number of serious repeat offenders (based on the SRO Index) is about **452** statewide

1,639 child defendants have been charged with the Breach of Bail Offence

4,099 charges laid since Breach of Bail Offence came into effect in March

1,558 charges containing one of the new unauthorised use of motor vehicle circumstances of aggravation, with **93.3%** of offenders convicted

40 serious repeat offenders have been declared

Support for victims



Appointment of an Interim Victims Commissioner Jon Rouse APM



Stronger representation for victims, now part of the Youth Justice Reference Group



Establishing an Independent Ministerial Advisory Council, through consultation with Voice for Victims

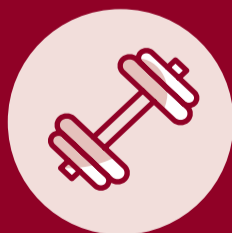


Establishing a Parliamentary Select Committee

Youth detention program summary



Educational, vocational training and skills through Education Queensland



Targeted cultural programs; speech and language, sport, recreation, fitness life skills



Targeted health programs offered through Queensland Health - including mental health, group therapy programs and substance use intervention



Behavioural change programs focussed on key issues, including domestic and family violence, emotional regulation, and aggression replacement programs