



## CALL TO INCREASE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY

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PRESSURE is mounting on the State Government to raise the age at which children can be held responsible for criminal behaviour, after national policy attempts collapsed.

Children as young as 10 can be charged and convicted of crimes but there is a growing push to raise the age to 14.

Last financial year, 35 children aged 10 to 13 were detained at the state's

Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre, where they can be housed with people as old as 20. Many are held on remand, but not convicted of a crime, and it is common for children to be released and detained many times in a year.

Attorneys-General in each state and territory had been working for years on a national policy but that stopped after the Queensland Government made an election commitment late last year

to keep the age at 10. The debate also has been reignited as activists this week mark 30 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Latest data shows just under half of all young people detained in South Australia are Aboriginal, despite comprising less than 5 per cent of the general youth population.

Attorney-General Vickie Chapman said her "preference has always

been" for a national policy.

About 200 people joined a rally in Victoria Square yesterday protesting about Aboriginal deaths in custody and incarceration of Aboriginal children.

SA Aboriginal Action Group founder Janette Milera said medical experts had shown children "don't understand the full consequences of their actions at 10 years of age because their brains are not fully developed".

Protesters in Victoria Square rally about Aboriginal deaths in custody. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Naomi Jellicoe