



Government of South Australia
Office of the Guardian
for Children and Young People



Government of South Australia
Training Centre Visitor

MEDIA RELEASE

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Training Centre Visitor disappointed 10-year-olds to remain in detention

Training Centre Visitor and Guardian for Children and Young People Penny Wright is disappointed at the Council of Attorneys-General's decision to not raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility. Currently across Australia children as young as 10 can be locked up in detention for breaking the law – many are never convicted of even committing a crime.

“Earlier this year I, and many others, urged the Council of Attorneys-General to raise the minimum age to 14 as we believe the current practices do not provide the best outcomes for these vulnerable and disadvantaged young children,” Training Centre Visitor and Guardian for Children and Young People Ms Penny Wright said.

“Time in detention is meant to ‘teach them a lesson’ and to change their criminal behaviours but all the evidence tells us detention does nothing to deter the child from committing future crimes,” Ms Wright said. “In fact, the younger the child when they come into contact with youth justice, the more likely they are to reoffend and start on a path to life-long involvement in the criminal justice system.”

“Studies show that a child under the age of 14 does not have the mental capacity to work out what constitutes a crime. In addition, many of these young children have come from backgrounds of significant trauma as a result of poverty, family violence, substance abuse and adverse life events.”

Findings from the Training Centre Visitor's latest report: *Great Responsibility: Report on the 2019 Pilot Inspection of the Adelaide Youth Training Centre (now known as the Kurlana Tapa Youth Justice Centre)* have highlighted concerns that children are not getting the adequate support they need to address their offending behaviours or to heal from past trauma that many of this cohort have experienced, both in the centre and in the community.

“We are disappointed that children will continue to be punished for a life they are born into through no fault of their own. Our office is determined to keep advocating for the rights of these vulnerable young children and we will keep pushing for 10-year-olds to be spared from being locked up in detention,” Ms Wright said.

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