

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **The solutions are there to counter youth crime, government just needs to listen**

South Australia's advocate for young people in detention is calling on the state's leaders to listen and act on evidence to combat youth crime in the wake of recently published teen reoffending data.

Numerous media stories this week have referenced "record teen offending" and included calls from various leaders to review penalties and bail arrangements for young offenders.

Training Centre Visitor, Shona Reid stressed these suggestions fly in the face of evidence and will see more children and young people detained, compounding their trauma, impairing their development, and as a result, increasing their risk of reoffending.

The state government and SAPOL have been focused on laws and taskforces that target children and will inevitably entrap children into cycles of crime they can't find their way out of.

Most recently the state government has commented that it was not prioritising raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility and was "open to ideas" on making the community safer.

Numerous legal, community service and human rights groups, including the Training Centre Visitor, [called for the age](#) to be raised to bring Australia in line with international human rights standards.

There is a wealth of scientific evidence that children under the age of 14 are not at a stage of development where they can fully understand the seriousness of their actions or make decisions about risk and committing a crime.

There is also a direct correlation between increased likelihood of reoffending the younger a child encounters the criminal justice system.

Ms Reid said the government is responsible for exploring all reasonable solutions that will stop children getting caught up in unsafe offending patterns.

There are clearly missed opportunities to change young people's lives and that includes how rehabilitative and restorative services are provided to children before and when they are inside Adelaide Youth Training Centre (AYTC).

The government has already been advised of serious concerns about access to services in AYTC, including that three in four school days had reduced lesson time in [2022-23](#).

Less than half of the rehabilitative programs that were supposed to be scheduled were delivered in the same financial year.

**Quotes attributable to Training Centre Visitor, Shona Reid**

“We can’t make communities safer by making new offences, and further criminalising children and young people who need help, it just won’t work”

“We know that children and young people in youth justice have often experienced serious trauma and abuse in their lives”.

“If they lose their way and are engaged in behaviours that makes our communities unsafe, telling children they bear all the responsibility is a cop out.”

“I must remind the South Australian government it is not a passenger in this process, it is charged with the responsibility to develop and implement solutions for our children, young people and communities – solutions that respond to evidence and benefit our community and our children.”

“Currently in Adelaide Youth Training Centre, I don’t believe that we are providing rehabilitation opportunities and services to the standard that our community expects.”

“If we’re going to asking the right questions about why young people are engaged in repeat offending, that’s where we need to focus our attention.”

“We’ve been doing taskforces and operations for years with little to no success in curbing the vulnerability of children or creating a safer community – why do we continue to do the same thing and think things will be any different”

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