

Children and Criminal Responsibility February 2021

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Leanne McLean will present at an online forum about the minimum age of criminal responsibility **in Hobart on February 25.**

Ms McLean said the forum - ***The Age of Innocence: Children and Criminal Responsibility*** – will be hosted by the University of Tasmania as part of its **Island of Ideas** public lecture series.

“Amid ongoing calls from international and human rights bodies for Australian jurisdictions to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to at least 14 years, the forum will explore what this might mean for Tasmania,” Ms McLean said.

“The forum will also promote a community discussion on alternative ways to address children’s problematic behaviour, meet their underlying needs and promote community safety.”

Ms McLean said currently children as young as 10 years old can be arrested and even jailed.

“While the vast majority children will never offend, evidence overwhelmingly shows us that it is our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children who come to the attention of the justice system at a young age.

“In Tasmania, the overall number of younger children in the justice system is relatively small, but children who offend at a young age are more likely to reoffend and become entrenched in the criminal justice system.

“The younger a child is when they have first contact with the justice system, the higher the chances of them reoffending and progressing down a path of life-long involvement with the justice system.

“Clearly, we need to be doing things differently.”

Ms McLean said early therapeutic intervention makes good economic sense.

“We need to give children the best opportunity to achieve their full potential while also reducing the potential impact their anti-social or harmful behaviour might otherwise have on individuals and communities.”

Aboriginal children, children with a disability and children in care make up a disproportionate number of children detained in Tasmania.

“Raising the age of criminal responsibility does not mean society turns a blind eye to problematic behaviour.

“What this means is that we need to work that bit harder to ensure children get the right support at the right time to address the underlying reasons for their behaviour.”



Ms McLean said the online forum will bring together an expert panel of practitioners and academics drawn from law, police, health, and community services to discuss these issues and take audience questions.

The Age of Innocence: Children and Criminal Responsibility
Island of Ideas Public Lecture Series, University of Tasmania

WHEN: 5-6.30pm, Thursday, February 25

Location: online (register at <https://www.utas.edu.au/events/2021/february/age-of-innocence-children-and-criminal-responsibility>)

Presenters:

- Donna Adams, Acting Deputy Commissioner of Police
- Rodney Dillon, Indigenous Advisor, Amnesty International Australia
- Alan Hensley, Associate Director (Crime), Tasmania Legal Aid
- Michael Hill, Former Chief Magistrate
- Leanne McLean, Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Dr Georgina O'Donnell, Forensic and Clinical Psychologist
- Moderated by Associate Professor Sonya Stanford

Media Contact: A.Mark Thomas, M&M Communications, 0422 006 732

Media contact: