

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility – Missed Opportunity

The Commissioner for Children and Young People Leanne McLean said the announcement by State Attorneys-General to work towards a national approach to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to just 12 years is a huge, missed opportunity.

“Based on Tasmania Police data from 2019-2020, raising the age to 14 would have kept around 187 Tasmanian children out of the criminal justice system,” Ms McLean said. “But raising the age to just 12 would have diverted just 28 children.

Ms McLean said the current system is not working.

“The earlier a child becomes involved in the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to become entrenched in that system. We also know children who face disadvantage and trauma, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, are disproportionately represented in the system.

“Raising the minimum age by just two years simply won’t make the difference that is needed to improve outcomes for our vulnerable children and for our community.”

Ms McLean said the decision by State Attorneys-General ignores mounting national and international evidence for an alternative approach.

“The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has been abundantly clear in its advice to Australia that it should raise the minimum age to at least 14 years.

“Tasmania had the opportunity to lead the nation by committing to raising the age to at least 14 and introducing an evidence-based therapeutic approach to these children.

“We need to stop criminalising disadvantage and vulnerability.”

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