

Australia and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians commend 'In My Blood It Runs' Documentary

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians reaffirm their support for raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility. We strongly recommend governments develop and expand early intervention programs that prevent youth offending.

There is a need to shift the conversation and the focus to what we can do to keep our children safe, and offer developmentally appropriate, therapeutic and community-based approaches.

Earlier this year, the Commissioners and Guardians viewed an advanced screening of the collaborative documentary film 'In My Blood It Runs'. The film tells a powerful story through the eyes of 10-year-old Djujan, an Arrernte/Garrwa boy living in a town camp in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), who comes dangerously close to spiraling into the criminal justice system.

Djujan became the youngest person to address the Human Rights Council at the United Nations in September 2019. In his address, Djujan said,

"Adults never listen to kids - especially kids like me. But we have important things to say. I came here to speak with you all because our government is not listening. There are some things I want to see changed: I want my school to be run by Aboriginal people who are like me and understand me. I want the adults to stop locking up 10 year old kids in prison. I want my future to be out on land with family, strong in culture and language. I hope you can find a way to make things much more better."

The Commissioners and Guardians understand the Council of Attorneys-General will be discussing the age of criminal responsibility at their meeting on 29 November 2019. We stand with Djujan's vision for change and commend 'In My Blood It Runs' to the Attorneys-General as they consider this issue.

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians advocate for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised to at least 14 in line with United Nations recommendations. We strongly recommend governments across Australia and New Zealand listen to the voices of children and their families and consider the wealth of evidence that points to the ineffective and harmful effects of youth detention when considering this important reform.

Statement endorsed by the following [Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians](#):

- Andrew Johnson, Advocate for Children and Young People, New South Wales
- April Lawrie, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, South Australia
- Cheryl Vardon, Principal Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Colin Pettit, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia
- Helen Connolly, Commissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia
- Jodie Griffiths-Cook, Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner, Australian Capital Territory
- Judge Andrew Becroft, Children's Commissioner, New Zealand
- Justin Mohamed, Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Victoria
- Leanne McLean, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Tasmania
- Liana Buchanan, Principal Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria
- Megan Mitchell, National Children's Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission
- Natalie Siegel-Brown, Public Guardian, Queensland
- Penny Wright, Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia