

**STATEMENT OF SUPPORT  
RAISE THE AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY  
IN TASMANIA**

We, the undersigned, call upon the Tasmanian Government and the Parliament of Tasmania to take urgent action to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Tasmania to at least 14 years of age.

Major Australian organisations representing the medical, mental health, child welfare and legal professions, as well as human rights bodies and organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, agree that the current minimum age of criminal responsibility – 10 years of age – is far too low.

The scientific evidence is overwhelming that, at the age of 10, a child's brain is still developing, particularly in terms of reasoning skills, impulsivity and consequential thinking.

The evidence also shows that many children who become involved in the criminal justice system come from disadvantaged backgrounds and have complex needs that are better addressed outside the criminal justice system through a developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed and culturally safe early intervention model that supports children in their families and communities.

Furthermore, there is also strong evidence that the younger children are when they first encounter the youth justice system, the more likely they are to reoffend.

Finally, the numbers show that the criminalisation of children in Australia overwhelmingly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, in force in virtually all countries in the world, states that the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration in all actions concerning children.

We note that this issue has been under discussion nationally but, after three years, attorneys-general of the states and territories have not been able to agree on a way forward.

There is no reason for Tasmania to wait for national consensus and, indeed, the federal Attorney-General has stated that "Ultimately it will be a decision for each jurisdiction whether to raise the minimum age".

This is an opportunity for Tasmania to show a better way of treating kids – a model based on programs and services that address the underlying causes of their behaviour, including programs for Aboriginal youth led by Indigenous people

Tasmania should act swiftly to raise the age of criminal responsibility and we commit ourselves to support this process in whatever way we can.

**Professor David Adams**, Professor of Management, University of Tasmania

**Salvatore Albinelli**, General Manager, Port Cygnet Cannery

**Professor Nicole L Asquith**, Director, Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies,  
University of Tasmania

**Robin Banks**, former Tasmanian Anti-Discrimination Commissioner (2010-17)

**Dr Isabelle Bartkowiak-Theron**, Senior Lecturer, Policing and Emergency Management,  
University of Tasmania

**Greg Barns SC**, Patron Justice Reform Initiative and Chair Prisoners Legal Service,  
Tasmania

**Dr Roger Bodley**, MA BM BCh FRACGP FRCR FRANZCR

**Bob Brown**, former Senator and Leader of the Australian Greens

**Dr Kate Cashman**, Course Coordinator, Policing and Emergency Management, University  
of Tasmania

**Yvette Cehel**, CEO, Women's Legal Service Tasmania

**Erin Collins**, Artistic Director, Cygnet Folk Festival

**Jaime Currie**, CEO, South East Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation

**Kristen Desmond**, Founder of the Tasmanian Disability Education Reform Lobby and  
former Chair of Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA)

**Connie Digolis**, Chief Executive Officer, Mental Health Council of Tasmania

**Rodney Dillon**, Amnesty Australia Indigenous Rights Adviser

**Associate Professor Angela Dwyer**, Deputy Director, Tasmanian Institute of Law  
Enforcement Studies, University of Tasmania

**Cr Bec Enders**, Mayor, Huon Valley Council

**Saul Eslake**, Independent Economist

**Mathew Evans & Sadie Chesterman**, Fat Pig Farm

**Dr Adam Forsyth**, Principal, St Michael's Collegiate

**The Honourable Lara Giddings**, former Premier and Attorney General of Tasmania

**Michael Gissing**, film maker

**Michael Hill**, former Chief Magistrate of Tasmania and former Acting Justice of the  
Supreme Court of Tasmania, Chair of the Just Deserts Drug Court Support Group

**Tania Hunt**, CEO, Youth Network of Tasmania

**Jane Hutchison**, President, Community Legal Centres Tasmania

**Dr Chris Jones**, CEO, Anglicare Tasmania

**Rosalie Martin**, Founder of Connect 42 and 2017 Tasmanian of the Year

**Dr Helen McArdle**, President, AMA Tasmania

**Trevor McKenna**, President, The Law Society of Tasmania

**Leanne McLean**, Commissioner for Children and Young People Tasmania

**Leanne Minshull**, Tasmanian Senate Candidate for Local Party, Publican Ferntree Tavern

**Caroline Pegg**, Chief Executive Officer, The Association for Children with Disability (Tas.)  
Inc.

**Adrienne Picone**, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Council on Social Service  
(TASCOSS)

**Scott Rankin**, Creative Director and CEO, Big hART and 2018 Tasmanian of the Year

**Mark Redmond**, CEO, Reconciliation Tasmania

**Cr Anna Reynolds**, Lord Mayor of Hobart

**Henry Reynolds**, Honorary Research Professor, Aboriginal Studies, Global Cultures &  
Languages

**Margaret Reynolds**, former Senator and Chair of the Commonwealth Human Rights  
Initiative

**Sonya Stanford**, Associate Dean, Learning and Teaching Performance, College of Arts, Law  
and Education, University of Tasmania

**Grace Tame**, 2021 Australian of the Year

**Bec Thomas**, Mayor of Glenorchy

**Paul Thomas**, Secretary, Friends of Randalls Bay Coastcare

**Annie Venables**, Film Producer, Viking Films

**Rajan Venkataraman**, Vice-President and Tasmanian Director, Civil Liberties Australia

**Deborah Wace**, Churchill Fellow, Printmaker

**Rob White**, Distinguished Professor, Criminology, School of Social Sciences, University of  
Tasmania

**Thirza White**, General Secretary, CPSU Tasmania

**The Honourable Jim Wilkinson**, former President of the Tasmanian Legislative Council,  
and President of the Tasmanian Football Board

**Darryl Williams**, Principal, Cygnet Primary School