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Catholic religious urge QLD Government to repeal laws that permit the holding of children in Watch Houses

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has written to the Queensland (QLD) Government with grave concerns about its recent decision to suspend the state's Human Rights Act to permit adult Watch Houses to be used as youth detention centres.

The state government's decision is completely at odds with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the recommendations of the recently launched inaugural *Queensland Child Rights Report (2023)*, which had emphasised the urgent attention needed to improve Queensland's youth justice system.

"Abhorrent conditions in watch houses have been reported, denying these children proper access to outdoor spaces and to education, sometimes for weeks at a time, and in many cases for minor charges that they have not yet been convicted of," CRA President, Fr Peter Jones OSA, said.

"We are also aware that QLD's youth justice system disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander children," he added.

In its letter, CRA pointed out that *The Queensland Child Rights Report (2023)* had also identified that a lack of government services for children in remote and regional parts of Queensland is increasing the likelihood that these children will come into contact with the justice system.

"In a reply letter to CRA, the Minister for Police and Corrective Services, the Hon. Mark Ryan MP, emphasised that his government wants to hold all offenders to account for the crimes they commit. Children, however, should be afforded the right of a youth justice system that is primarily focussed on prevention and rehabilitation," said Anne Walker, CRA's National Executive Director.

"The QLD government should be shifting its legislative focus and funding to prevent children from falling down a path of criminal activity in the first place, providing them with the necessary support and skills to thrive," said Anne Walker.

CRA urged the government to not only repeal these laws, but also to work more closely with its Family and Child Commission, to urgently address its recommendations for a rights-based comprehensive Children's Plan.

Click here to read [CRA's letter to the QLD Government](#).

Click here to read the [reply letter from the Hon. Mark Ryan MP](#)

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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