



Legal Aid NT

Submission to the Australian Human Rights Commission

Youth Justice and Child Wellbeing Reform

June 2023

Introduction

The vision under Legal Aid NT's strategic plan is 'to be a leader in a fair Northern Territory (NT) Justice System.' A goal is to play a leading role in the development of legislation and policy.

Legal Aid NT provides legal services in a range of matters including criminal law, civil law, domestic violence, child protection and family law and to a range of demographics in the community, including to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. These services are provided in a range of locations including courts, remote locations and youth detention centres.

Legal Aid NT acknowledges the overwhelming majority of young people in care and in detention in the NT are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and commits to working towards the NT Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the NT, the NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement and the Closing the Gap targets to improve community safety and reduce First Nations incarceration rates in the NT.

Despite the considerable international, national and NT spotlight on youth justice and child wellbeing in the NT, especially in the last two decades, we have not seen any of the significant improvements we have been advocating for. Significant government initiatives such as the NT Emergency Response and the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT have presented an opportunity for the radical and generational change needed in the NT. In our opinion, these initiatives have had minimal positive impact on outcomes for youth justice and child wellbeing in the NT, and in many respects their impact has been negative.

1. What factors contribute to children’s and young people’s involvement in youth justice systems in Australia?

We acknowledge the broad and underlying drivers which contribute to children and young people’s involvement in the youth justice system in Australia, such as the impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma and ongoing systemic racism.

In the Northern Territory (NT), particular drivers include:

- The extremely high rates of homelessness, at 12 times the national average, and access to safe, secure and affordable housing, as reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS);¹
- The pervasive and extreme context of high levels of domestic and family violence, also well over the national average, as outlined in the *2023 Evidence Snapshot: what we know about domestic, family and sexual violence in the NT – and what we don’t*;²
- High rates of adverse childhood experiences. A recent systematic review and meta-analysis by Astridge et al at James Cook University of more than 420,000 youth offenders found that adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), which are traumatic events of household dysfunction and various forms of abuse and neglect, increase the risk of youth offending and recidivism;³
- The high prevalence of disability⁴ and lack of appropriate disability supports.
- The persistent overuse of imprisonment, including:
 - The extremely high rates of adult imprisonment, compared to the National average, see graph below,⁵ noting that incarceration of a household member is an ACE which increases the risk of youth offending;
 - The high proportion of young people in detention, particularly following changes to NT bail legislation in 2021.⁶ We note that across Australia, rates of young people under supervision (including community-based supervision and detention) decreased on average from 2017-18 to 2021-22, however in the NT the number of young people in detention increased by 30% over that time, with the rate increasing from 16 to 20/10,000.⁷

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/housing/estimating-homelessness-census/latest-release>

² https://www.equalityinstitute.org/media/pages/resources/evidence-snapshot-what-we-know-about-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence-in-the-northern-territory-and-what-we-don-t/6b0ee996d9-1686115013/nt_evidence_snapshot_eqi.pdf

³ Astridge et al, “A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis on Adverse Childhood Experiences: Prevalence in Youth Offenders and Their Effects on Youth Recidivism” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 140 (2023).

The reported prevalence of disability in the NT is 11.6%, but this is likely to be an estimate. See Northern Territory Government, *Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2032*, p 8,

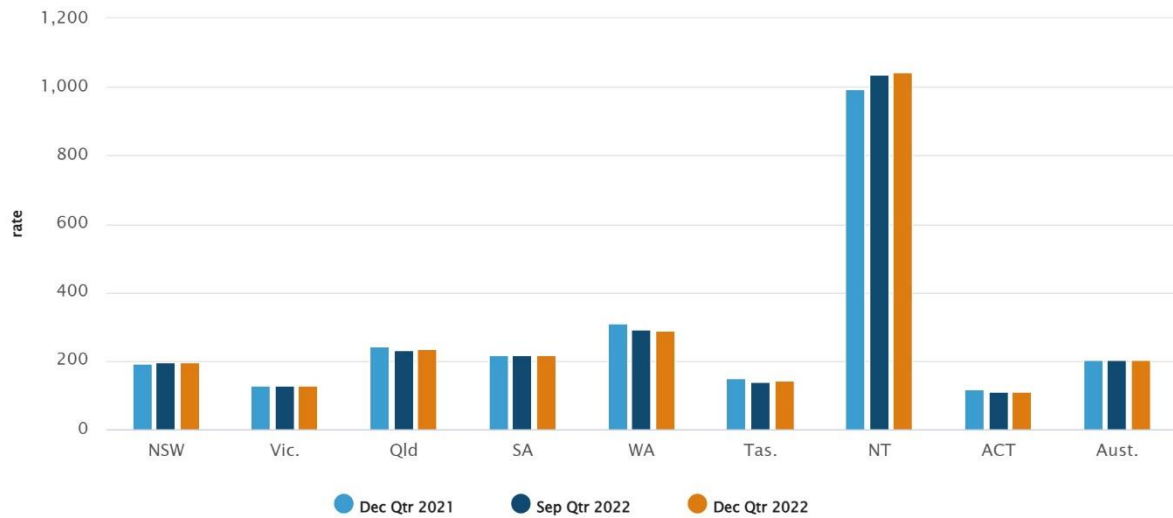
https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/1124183/disability-strategy.pdf

⁵ <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/corrective-services-australia/latest-release>

⁶ Productivity Commission (2023). Report on government services 2023, table 17A.1.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, “Youth Justice in Australia 2021-2022”, p 38.

Average daily imprisonment rate(a), By states and territories, Dec 2021, Sep 2022 and Dec 2022



(a) Rate is the number of prisoners per 100,000 adult population. Based on average daily number.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Corrective Services, Australia December Quarter 2022

- The age of criminal responsibility. Although it is intended to be raised to 12 years in the NT before 2025, this has not yet occurred. If or when this does occur, 12 years remains too young. In 2019, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended 14 years as the minimum age. It is well known that the younger a child is dealt with by the criminal justice system, the more likely the child will reoffend.⁸
- Over policing of First Nations communities in the NT, creating a net-widening effect.⁹
- The drift of First Nations children from the care and protection system to the criminal justice jurisdiction.¹⁰
- Poverty and social disadvantage.¹¹

While acknowledging these drivers, the substance of this submission will be limited to those matters that we directly observe and encounter as a legal assistance provider to clients navigating legal systems.

The Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT¹² has written extensively about the more immediate drivers, for example, Chapter 33, Children in Out of

⁸ “Reoffending by Children and Young People in Victoria”, Sentencing Advisory Council Victoria, December 2016, page xii

⁹ Schwartz, Melanie “Redressing Indigenous Over-representation in the criminal justice system with Justice reinvestment”, [2013] Precedent AULA 69; (2013) 118 Precedent 38

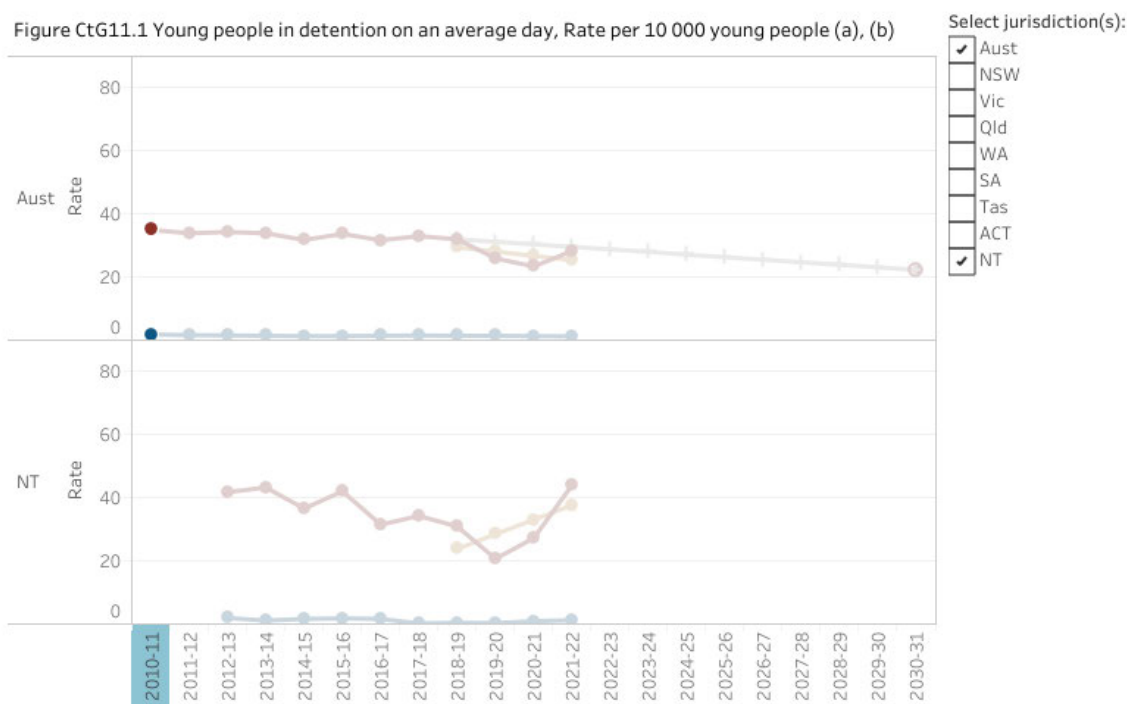
¹⁰ https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/ti582_crossover_kids-v2.pdf

¹¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody, 1991, Vol.1, p.1.7.1

¹² <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/child-detention/final-report;>
<https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/system/files/2020-09/findings-and-recommendations.pdf>

Home Care; Chapter 35, The Crossover of Care and Detention; Chapter 25, the Path to Detention.

It is with regret that we refer to those findings and recommendations. Unfortunately, there are many findings which remain current, recommendations that have not been implemented, and areas which have not been addressed or changed. In some areas, such as youth detention, the outcomes are worsening, as recently published by the Australian Productivity Commission.¹³



Source: table CtG11A.1, AIHW Youth justice in Australia, Derived from AIHW Youth justice National Minimum Dataset, ABS Australian Demographic Statistics, ABS Estimates and Projections, Joint Council National Agreement on Closing the Gap

(a) Targets and trajectories are only available nationally. (b) See data table CtG11A.1 for information on non-publication of data on people in detention for individual jurisdictions.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Actual
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Linear regression estimates
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Target
- + Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Trajectory
- Non-Indigenous people, Actual

We also refer to the 2023 report of the Justice Reform Initiative, “Alternatives to Incarceration in the Northern Territory” which provides a sound overview of the state of incarceration of children and young people in the Northern Territory, and provides evidence based case studies of community led early intervention and early prevention initiatives, as well initiatives to reduce the number of children in prison.¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/socioeconomic/outcome-area11>

¹⁴ https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI_Alternatives_NT_Full_FINAL-2_copy.pdf?1684122983

2. What needs to be changed so that youth justice and related systems protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people? What are the barriers to change, and how can these be overcome?

We know that a small number of young people are responsible for the majority of youth crime, that offenders who enter the juvenile justice system at an earlier age have higher reoffending rates, and youth who have had more previous offences are more likely to reoffend.¹⁵ It is important that youth are kept out of the youth justice system via early intervention, that once engaged with the justice system there are fewer youth before the courts (e.g. diversion programs),¹⁶ and that a human rights and therapeutic framework is adopted in respect of all children in the youth justice and child protection systems.

The NT Government must invest in evidence-based programs and services run by the community sector (especially First Nations-led organisations) that address the social drivers of contact with the criminal justice system and provide ‘off-ramps’ out of the justice system.¹⁷ Critical programs include holistic and detailed physiological and well-being assessments of children and young people, housing and homeless services, support across care and child protection, support to retain engagement in education and health systems, support to address poverty, trauma and disability, and support to develop healthy relationships and family dynamics.¹⁸

In addition to the Justice Reform Initiative’s 2023 Report, we refer you to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT, chapter 27, which contains recommendations about reshaping the youth justice system, focussing on early intervention, fewer children before the courts, and fewer children entering detention, including recommending no children in detention before age 14.

Changes Needed

The changes that are needed so that youth justice and related systems protect the rights and wellbeing of children and young people include:

- An increase in the voices of children in the legal process, including by presumption of the appointment of specialised child representatives in child in need of protection matters under the *Care and Protection of Children Act* and the appointment of litigation guardians in civil proceedings against the NT.
- Stronger and independent protection and oversight mechanisms that prioritise the voice, rights and best interests of children and young people, ensuring compliance with international conventions, which Australia is a signatory to, in relation to care and protection, ‘safe care’ out of home care, youth detention and policing of children and young people.

¹⁵ Sentencing Advisory Council, “Reoffending by Children and Young People in Victoria”, 2016, 6; Royal Commission into the Protection & Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, final report 2017, Chapter 27, p410.

¹⁶ Royal Commission into the Protection & Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, final report 2017, Chapter 27, p410-418.

¹⁷ See Justice Reform Initiative, *Alternatives to Incarceration in the Northern Territory* (May 2023) at 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, at 10.

- Radical changes to the policing of and support for families experiencing domestic and family violence, consistent with the recommendations of the Journey Mapping Workshop Report, *Exploring the voices and experiences of victim/survivors of Domestic and Family Violence in the NT Justice System*.¹⁹
- Radical changes to the policing of children and young people, particularly First Nations children and young people, and children and young people with disabilities.
- Identification and elimination of systemic racism in government agencies and contracted service providers that directly or indirectly discriminate against Aboriginal Territorians engaged in the justice system as outlined in the NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement 2021-27.
- A more accessible process and improved access to legal assistance for parents who are the subject of child protection proceedings under the *Care and Protection of Children Act*, as outlined in the Submission into the Inquest of Sammy.²⁰
- Improved and increased access to early intervention and early prevention, rehabilitation and support programs, including trauma informed rehabilitation programs, disability supports, mental health support etc., to address the specific needs of children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems.²¹
- Design of and funding for targeted parenting and mentoring programmes to provide education, insight and parenting skills for children and young people at various stages of development and behavioural challenges.²²
- Increased support for all children and young people with disability in the youth justice and care and protection systems, including access to specialist assessment and treatment and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.
- Increased diversion processes and options including through reform of police and court approaches to diversion. Police should employ warnings and other non-arrest options wherever practicable, especially for young people.²³ Police discretion in relation to diversion, at the gate keeping level, should be regulated. The Youth Court should have power to make orders for diversion when police have elected not to, ensuring judicial oversight. The number of offences for which police and courts can divert should be increased.
- The publication of data illustrating how many children in the NT are referred to diversionary programs by Police.

¹⁹ https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/a4a6272a/files/uploaded/41391%20Mapping%20Project%20Report%20Book_web.pdf

²⁰ <https://www.legalaid.nt.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Sammy-Inquest-submission-December-2021.pdf>

²¹ For evidence based case studies of early intervention and prevention programs for children, see Justice Reform Initiative, “Alternatives to Incarceration in the Northern Territory” pp 11-16, available here: https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI_Alternatives_NT_Full_FINAL-2_copy.pdf?1684122983

²³ Australian Law Reform Commission (2017), *Pathways to Justice – Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, Report No 133, Australian Government, p. 452.

- Expanding the jurisdiction of the Youth Court in criminal matters, so that children and young people are predominantly dealt with by a specialist Childrens Court. Only those matters that are objectively very serious should be finalised in the Supreme Court. For example, robbery matters in company or whilst armed with an offensive weapon, in NSW are eligible to be finalised in the Children’s Court. In the NT they are finalised in the Supreme Court. In practice this means children in the NT are often receiving harsher sentences than those children in other jurisdictions.
- Reforming the Bail Act to ensure that children and young people are not treated more harshly than their adult counterparts. In particular, amending the Bail Act so that a breach of curfew is not considered a “serious breach of bail.” Changing the practice so that the bail condition of electronic monitoring is not imposed as a frequent condition of bail for children in the NT.
- Funding for a Youth Hotline, so that Children and young people in the NT are entitled to legal support and advocacy when they are detained in custody (as are children, for example, in NSW).
- Given the large numbers of children and young people in the NT living with cognitive or mental health impairment, the provision of adequate funding to ensure that children being sentenced have access to specialists with suitable qualifications to provide high quality assessments that can inform future supports.
- Legislative reform that ensures young people who are in youth detention and turn 18 years old, are not moved from youth detention to adult detention on their 18th birthday, as is currently the practice for most young people in the NT.
- Investment in alternatives to custody.
- Design, creation and funding for a Therapeutic Care Court model to work with both children/young people and caregivers during statutory intervention involving wraparound service provider engagement and court case management.
- The incorporation of First Nations cultural values, knowledge and practice into the child protection and youth justice systems, including through the establishment of and investment in community courts and restorative justice initiatives led by First Nations communities.
- Embedded processes to prevent the criminalisation of children in out of home care.
- Radical improvements to conditions in youth detention, bail supported accommodation, watch houses, out-of-home care and other facilities so that the fundamental human rights of young people are observed and respected.
- A review of the workforce capabilities of the youth detention sector and the prioritisation of funding for recruitment of:
 - senior personnel and a multi-disciplinary workforce with relevant qualifications and experience working with adolescents; and
 - First Nations staff, particularly into senior leadership positions,

noting that currently it is not necessary to hold any formal qualifications or relevant experience to be employed as a Youth Justice Officer at one of the NT's youth detention centres.²⁴

- Enhanced protections for girls and young women in the youth justice system, noting that government-funded bail supported accommodation in Darwin is only made available to boys, and girls and young women in detention in the NT report having fewer opportunities for recreation and programs compared with their male peers.
- Improved and accessible data and evaluation, so that we have the data to monitor and effectively evaluate the effectiveness of child protection and youth justice programs and initiatives, enabling evidence-based decision making and system improvement.
- Immediate funding for adequate case management programs, youth services and resources that focus on the development of individualised support and rehabilitative programs addressing criminogenic concerns for those children at risk of entering, or who are already involved in, the criminal justice system.

Barriers in the NT

The barriers to change include:

- Resource constraints hinder the implementation of reforms and the delivery of services. For example, the Royal Commission was a joint NT and Commonwealth Government sponsored initiative however the Australian Government did not contribute to the implementation of the recommendations.
- Workforce constraints unique to the NT impact on recruitment and retention of a quality, consistent and trained workforce. This directly impacts children and young people in the care and youth justice systems. For example, recurrent staff shortages at the NT's youth detention centres frequently result in additional lockdowns, cancellations of visits, activities and programs, and delays in children accessing specialist medical treatment.
- Systemic failures to identify and address the complex needs of children with disabilities, particularly those with neurodevelopmental impairment or developmental delay.
- Systemic failures to address complex needs and vulnerabilities of parents and caregivers to support them in their caregiving role and return of children and young people into their care. The continuum of caregiving and decision making by family needs better design and resourcing.
- The over-use of incarceration in the NT has been fuelled by a politicised approach to justice policy,²⁵ with successive NT Governments from each party competing to promote a 'tough on crime' agenda and labelling options such as diversion and therapeutic detention models as 'soft on crime'. Too often, decision-making about critical policy and legislative reform has focused on political rather than policy outcomes. People in power

²⁴ Northern Territory Government Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, *Information Sheet: Interested in becoming a Youth Justice Officer?* (4 October 2022) version 1
<https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0006/1155426/interested-in-becoming-a-youth-justice-officer-fact-sheet.docx>

²⁵https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI_Alternatives_NT_Full_FINAL-2_copy.pdf?1684122983

have neglected the evidence about what actually works to reduce crime. The failure in the NT to commit to evidence-based policy in this area has overwhelmingly impacted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who are significantly over-represented at every negative point of contact with the criminal law and child protection systems.²⁶

- Systemic racism and an absence of cultural competence within the institutions that deal with children and young people, including lawyers, courts and the judiciary, police, youth detention centres, government departments, and contracted service providers.
- Lack of transparency and accountability within institutions responsible for the care, protection and detention of children and young people. For example:
 - Our lawyers face barriers to accessing information about the health needs of children in detention, with the NT Government recently directing the health service provider at Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre not to provide young people’s health information to their lawyers;²⁷
 - Decisions to transfer children between detention facilities in the NT are frequently made without adequate consultation with families, legal representatives, and health and disability support providers, contrary to relevant policy directives;²⁸
 - Between April 2021 and June 2022 only two visits were made to Don Dale Youth Detention Centre by the Official Visitors, who have a statutory obligation under the *Youth Justice Act 2005* (NT) to visit the facility each month and report concerns to the Minister.²⁹

3. Can you identify reforms that show evidence of positive outcomes, including reductions in children’s and young people’s involvement in youth justice and child protection systems, either in Australia or internationally?

We again refer to the 2023 report of the Justice Reform Initiative, “Alternatives to Incarceration in the Northern Territory” which provides evidence-based case studies of community led early intervention and early prevention initiatives, as well initiatives to reduce the number of children in prison.³⁰ One of the case studies provided is that of the “Diagrama model” which we also consider below.

²⁶ <https://www.news.com.au/national/crime/truth-about-alice-springs-dogwhistling-claims-as-violence-erupts/news-story/14b7f4b335d6f0c7fb61848f108b61d3>

²⁷ See, eg, Melissa Mackay, ‘Youth detainees in Alice Springs detention centre lose ‘urgent’ bid against transfer to Don Dale’, *ABC News (Online)*, 26 May 2023, last accessed 1 June 2023 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-05-26/alice-springs-youth-detainees-darwin-transfer-surpeme-court/102398642>>.

²⁸ Northern Territory Government Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, *Youth Justice Policy Determination 2.6: Escorts and Transfers*, version 1.1, 5 April 2019, last accessed 1 June 2023, <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/497028/Youth-Justice-Policy-Determination-2.6-Escorts.pdf>

²⁹ See, eg, Jano Gibson, ‘FOI documents show the NT is breaching its own independent monitoring policy at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre’, *ABC News (Online)*, 24 August 2022, last accessed 1 June 2023 <<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-24/don-dale-youth-detention-centre-nt-foi-policy-failings/101338742>>.

³⁰

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/justicereforminitiative/pages/337/attachments/original/1684122983/JRI_Alt_ernatives_NT_Full_FINAL-2_copy.pdf?1684122983

Facilities for youth detention or supported accommodation: the Diagrama model

In October 2019, the NT Department of Territory Families (Territory Families) funded the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT (AMSANT) to host a visit by representatives from Diagrama Foundation (Diagrama). Diagrama is an international not-for-profit organisation based in Spain that runs therapeutic youth custodial facilities. Diagrama's model of care is centred around the themes of relationships and emotions, cognition, behaviour and progression. Features of the Diagrama model include:

- Employing tertiary-qualified 'social educators' who work with young people throughout every aspect of their day to day with the aim of allowing them to address their experiences and behaviours.
- Comprehensive case management, supported by a multidisciplinary professional 'Technical Team' (including psychologists and social workers) who carry out a thorough assessment of each young person so they can be supported based on their needs, including to acquire social and thinking skills like self-control, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, conflict management, and critical thinking.
- A full day of education and activities for all young people, every day, supported by social educators, qualified teachers, and vocational (VET) instructors.
- Normal and engaging environments – Diagrama work to make their centres feel like a normal environment with young people engaged in their decoration, upkeep and gardening, and with everyday furniture rather than 'prison' furniture. They also enable young people to have a normal daily rhythm appropriate to their age, usually with a 9.30pm or 10:00pm bedtime. This provides greater opportunities to learn and engage in activities and avoids problems caused by frustration as a result of boredom or loneliness.

Diagrama's model results in low rates of recidivism and has earned them Special Consultative Status to the United Nations. When representatives from Diagrama visited the NT, they conducted consultations and site visits in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs, to scope the environment, opportunities and challenges in the NT for implementing an adapted Diagrama model. They consulted with a range of stakeholders and produced an in-depth report³¹ on how their model could be adapted to the NT.

Regrettably, the NT Government chose not to implement Diagrama's model in the recent redesign of NT youth detention facilities. The Diagrama model is an excellent example of an evidence-based approach to youth detention that would reduce involvement with the youth justice system and simultaneously enable young people to access critical supports and interventions.

³¹ Diagrama Foundation, 'A Blueprint for Change: adapting the lessons of the Spanish Youth Justice System to the Northern Territory', *Report of the Diagrama Visit* (October 2019) <https://ddhs.org.au/sites/default/files/media-library/documents/Blueprint%20for%20Change%20-%20Diagrama%20Foundation%20Report%20FINAL.pdf>

Changes to youth courts, youth bail and sentencing options

Youth court, youth bail and sentencing reforms that show evidence of positive outcomes include:

- The *Young Offenders Act 1997 (NSW)*, that regulates Police and Court Diversion, and outlines clear objectives and principles in establishing a diversionary scheme which provides an alternative process to formal court proceedings.
- The introduction of the Youth Koori Court in the Children’s Court jurisdiction in NSW, whose objectives include, “to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people’s, confidence in the criminal justice system, to reduce risk factors related to the re-offending of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and to reduce the rates of breaches of bail...”³²
- The broad jurisdiction of the Childrens Court in NSW, which means that only extremely serious offences (serious children’s indictable offences³³) are committed to the District or Supreme Courts.
- Provisions in the *Bail Act 2013 (NSW)* that relate to the imposition of an accommodation requirement in relation to a child. Where this order has been made the Court must ensure that the matter is listed every 2 days until the accommodation requirement is complied with. Further, the Court may direct an officer “of a Division of a Government Service” to attend Court and provide information as to what action is being taken to secure suitable arrangements for accommodation of the child.³⁴ This goes some way to addressing the problem with homeless children being refused bail for welfare reasons and places the onus on the relevant Government Department to find the child somewhere suitable to live.
- Youth Hotline provided by Legal Aid NSW, which all children in custody are entitled to call.
- The Dual Track sentencing system, which is unique to Youth Justice in Victoria. It allows adult courts to sentence young adults aged 18 to 20 years to serve a custodial sentence in a Youth Justice centre rather than an adult prison. This program operates as a genuine alternative to adult custody. “It acknowledges the evidence that young adults can still be developing and have good prospects of rehabilitation, and that adult prison may not be the most suitable environment to maximise those prospects.”³⁵
- Victoria's Family Drug Treatment Court.³⁶

³² Practice Note 11, Youth Koori Court, NSW Children’s Court.

³³ Sections 3 and 28 Children (Criminal Proceedings) Act 1987 (NSW).

³⁴ Section 28 Bail Act 2013 (NSW)

³⁵ <https://www.justice.vic.gov.au/youth-justice-strategic-plan-2020-2030-strengthening-the-dual-track-system>; <https://www.childrencourt.vic.gov.au/>

³⁶

4. From your perspective, are there benefits in taking a national approach to youth justice and child wellbeing reform in Australia? If so, what are the next steps?

We are supportive of the development and enforcement of national standards in respect of youth justice. Those standards should be consistent with the universal fundamental human rights of children and young people, and intersecting rights, including the rights of people with disabilities, and the rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, we caution that a national approach should embed the necessary flexibility to ensure that the local context drives place-based responses, and such that community led solutions are enacted.

Conclusion

Legal Aid NT welcomes the National Children's Commissioner conducting a project that investigates opportunities for reform of youth justice and related systems across Australia, based on evidence and the protection of human rights. We will be happy to participate in stakeholder interviews and roundtables and to assist in providing any further information you may require.



Annmarie Lumsden

Director

30 June 2023