



**CHALLENGE
INJUSTICE.**

19 August 2022

Hon Elise Archer MP
Attorney-General, Minister for Justice,
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation
Level 10, 15 Murray Street
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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

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CC: Hon Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Education, Children & Youth; Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Dear Minister Archer

Re: Hearings on sexual assault at Ashley Youth Detention Centre

Amnesty International expresses our outrage at the harrowing testimonies of child sexual and physical abuse at Ashley Youth Detention Centre at the ongoing Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

On behalf of Amnesty International, I write to you to request a meeting with you to discuss the urgent steps your department is taking to prevent any further harm to children currently detained at Ashley. Joining me will be Rodney Dillon, a Palawa Elder from Tasmania and the Indigenous Rights Advisor for Amnesty International Australia.

We welcomed your government's announcement last year to close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre in three years. Yesterday's chilling evidence of child sexual assault has shown the need to take some decisive actions sooner rather than later.

Amnesty International urges you to:

- Consider closing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as a matter of urgency
- Immediately release the children who are on remand and ensure adequate support is provided
- Implement Aboriginal-led, trauma-informed diversion programs for Aboriginal children and young people to address factors contributing to offending
- Ensure those directly involved in the sexual assault and those responsible for this culture of brutality towards vulnerable children are held to account

As you are aware, the latest allegations are part of a broader pattern of horrors that have been taking place behind the locked gates of Tasmania's only youth detention centre for many decades. Concerns about this facility had been raised in reports to successive governments as far back as 2002.

Amnesty International advocates for a fairer youth justice system, disproportionately impacting Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander children in all jurisdictions, including Tasmania. The repeated assaults on young people have shown that Ashley Youth Detention Centre is not safe for children. Kids should not be in youth detention centres like Ashley or any other prison. They should be with families, in schools and in communities.

It was a relief to hear the Tasmanian government recently committing to raising the age of detention to 14 by the end of 2024. It is a welcome step but falls short of the meaningful reform we need, not just to keep young people out of prisons but also to ensure that children under 14 are never arrested or put in a police lock up, but instead supported with therapeutic, culturally- and age-appropriate alternatives.

Now is the time to show more decisive leadership and take the critical step to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14, in line with the unanimous advice from health professionals, legal advocates, community groups, human rights organisations and the United Nations.

Amnesty International would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you and discuss our recommendations in more detail.

Please contact Kyinzom Dhongdue at kyinzom.dhongdue@amnesty.org.au or 0416 695 590 to arrange a meeting appointment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M Munn', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Maggie Munn
Indigenous Rights Lead Campaigner
Amnesty International Australia