

Queensland backs criminal age rise, youth crackdown

By Nick Gibbs

Updated February 23 2023 - 12:48pm, first published 12:45pm

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 Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman says Queensland supports raising the criminal age from 10. (Darren England/AAP PHOTOS)

The Queensland government continues to back a national push to raise the age of criminal responsibility, as it prepares to override its own human rights laws to crack down on child offenders.

Attorney-General Shannon Fentiman says Queensland supports efforts to raise the age from 10, but didn't say if her state will go it alone if national efforts fail.

"We would like a nationally consistent approach when it comes to young people," Ms Fentiman told reporters on Thursday.

In 2021 Australian states and territories agreed to develop a plan to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12, but a draft report last year recommended raising the age from 10 to 14 without exception.

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The Northern Territory and ACT governments have committed to raising the age to 12 and 14 respectively, while Tasmania plans to raise the minimum age of detention to 14.

Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has flagged plans to go it alone if a national consensus can't be reached.

Ms Fentiman's comments come amid debate about controversial youth justice legislation that will limit the human rights of children, which was tabled in Queensland parliament this week.

Children will be charged with a new crime of breaching bail if they fail to comply with a condition of bail set by a court under the proposed laws.

The legislation will also increase the maximum prison term for car thefts and joy-rides from seven to 10 years, trial electronic monitoring of children as young as 15, and speed up sentencing for youngsters.

The government has admitted its proposals will have a greater impact on children, particularly Indigenous kids, and limit human rights that it enshrined in law four years ago.

Ms Fentiman said the state's Human Rights Act was made to be overridden in "exceptional circumstances", and the decision to do so wasn't taken lightly.

"We have seen an incredible escalation of violence, particularly with the weapons that are now being used," she said.

The government also plans to ramp up police patrols, build two new 'therapeutic' detention centres, and expand its intensive case management system, youth co-responder teams and other early intervention programs.

Ms Fentiman says a "huge injection" in early intervention programs will help keep the community safe.

"And there will have to be consequences for young people who do the wrong thing," she said.

The legislation will go through a two-week committee process, before it is expected to be passed into law.