

SUBMISSION TO JUSTICE, INTEGRITY AND COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE REGARDING THE YOUTH JUSTICE (CIRCUIT BREAKER) AMENDMENT BILL 2026

L&C | 52/2/4-02 | #7911106

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council:

Retrospectively endorses the attached submission to the Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee in support of the introduction of the Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026.

INTERESTED PARTIES:

N/A

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On the 25 June, the Queensland Government introduced the Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026 into Parliament. The Bill was referred to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee, which has invited interested parties to provide submissions in response to the Bill.

Council Officers have prepared and lodged a submission on behalf of Cairns Regional Council. The submission commends the Queensland Government for investing in alternative rehabilitative custodial models, whilst urging the Committee to give consideration to a range of aspects of the program, including selection of appropriate locations and program service providers, departmental oversight, the importance of access to wrap around supports and culturally responsive care and transparent reporting of recidivism following program participation.

BACKGROUND:

On 25 June 2026, the Hon Laura Gerber, Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, introduced the Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026 into Parliament. The Bill was referred to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee for detailed consideration.

The overarching objective of the Bill is to improve community safety and reduce youth crime by establishing a structured rehabilitation program that removes young offenders from the community. The Circuit Breaker program intent is to provide court-ordered, intensive rehabilitation intervention for youth offenders, as an alternative to detention, to address offending behaviour and reduce rates of reoffending. To be delivered on a remote

working properly, the program will provide a structured and supportive environment where young people can develop the skills and behaviours necessary for long-term, positive reintegration into the community. It is designed to address the underlying causes of offending through evidence-based interventions, while providing young people with constructive life-skills, education and job readiness skills. Program participants will wear electronic monitoring devices to protect the safety of the young people, staff and surrounding communities.

COMMENT:

In preparing the submission for the Commission, Council Officers reviewed data from the Productivity Commission (2026), which highlights that Queensland continues to grapple with significant challenges in relation to youth crime. Every year since 2020, Queensland has recorded the highest daily average of young people in youth detention in Australia. In the 2024-25 reporting period, on average 290 young people were in youth detention in Queensland, making up almost 40% of the national daily average figure (734) and more than New South Wales (184) and Victoria (74) combined (258). The financial cost of detention for Queensland taxpayers is substantial, with the average daily cost of keeping a young person in detention being \$2,713.94 in the 2024-25 financial year. Despite this significant investment, outcomes remain concerning, with 71% of young people released from detention in Queensland reoffending within 12 months - in comparison to an average of 56.7% nationally.

Council's submission highlights these figures, whilst expressing strong support for the investment into alternative custodial models which focus on rehabilitation of young offenders. Council supports the intent of the Circuit Breaker program and calls on the Queensland Government to ensure it delivers comprehensive wrap around and culturally responsive supports, engages an experienced service provider, maintains strong oversight and transparent evaluation, and provides structured transition and aftercare services to maximise successful reintegration and reduce reoffending. Additionally, the submission calls for increased investment and policy reform in relation to early intervention and prevention to address the systemic and underlying causes of youth offending.

OPTIONS:

That Council:

Option 1 (recommended):

Retrospectively endorses the attached submission to the Queensland Parliament's Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee in support of the introduction of the Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026.

Option 2:

That Council does not endorse the attached submission to the Commission and requests that it be withdrawn.

CONSIDERATIONS:

Corporate and Operational Plans:

Councils' submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee supports the following pillars of Council's Corporate Plan 2025-2030:

Focus 3: Design for liveability - *A place-based approach that celebrates our community*

- Proactive advocacy and collaboration with state and federal governments
- Promote a vibrant community that supports wellbeing, safety and resilience

CONSULTATION:

Council Officers consulted with Councillors prior to drafting the submission. Councillors were then provided with a draft copy of the submission for feedback and comment prior to the finalised submission being uploaded to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee website.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – CRC Submission to the Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee re: Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) 2026 Bill (DM# 7915170).



Andrew Moore
Executive Manager Community Life



Destry Puia
Director Lifestyle & Community



Our Ref: # 7909190

13 July 2026

Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026
Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Via email: jicsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Dear Committee

Cairns Regional Council welcomes the opportunity to express support for the *Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026* introduced into Parliament by the Hon Laura Gerber, Minister for Youth Justice and Victim Support and Minister for Corrective Services, on 25 June 2026.

Recently released data from the Productivity Commission (2026) shows that Queensland continues to grapple with a significant youth crime crisis, with data indicating:

- Every year since 2020, Queensland has recorded the highest daily average of young people in youth detention in the country. In the 2024-25 reporting period, on average 290 young people were in youth detention in Queensland, making up almost 40% of the national daily average figure (734).
- The financial cost of detention for Queensland taxpayers is substantial. The average daily cost of keeping a young person in detention is \$2,713.94 in Queensland, compared with \$493.17 for community-based supervision, making detention more than five times more expensive than community-based alternatives.
- Despite this significant investment in custodial detention, outcomes remain concerning, with 71% of young people released from detention in Queensland reoffending within 12 months - in comparison to an average of 56.7% nationally.

This alarming data suggests that Queensland's youth sentencing frameworks and the lack of access to sustained and appropriate rehabilitative programs has created a counterproductive system that perpetuates crime (Atkinson, 2022; APC, 2023). The need for new approaches to sentencing and rehabilitating young offenders is clear and Cairns Regional Council commends the Queensland Government for investing in alternative rehabilitative custodial approaches, including the Circuit Breaker program.

Council understands the Circuit Breaker program involves a 3-6 month intensive, structured, rehabilitative alternative to detention. Located on a rural or remote working property such as a cattle station, the program will provide a structured and supportive environment where youth can develop the skills and behaviours necessary for long-term, positive reintegration into their communities. It is designed to address the underlying causes of offending through evidence-based interventions, while providing young people with education and job readiness skills and other constructive life-skills such as farming, cleaning, washing and cooking. Program participants will be held at the secure location and wear electronic monitoring devices to protect the safety of the young people, staff and surrounding communities.

Whilst we express strong support for the overall intent of the Circuit Breaker program, Council urges the Queensland Government to ensure:

- Circuit Breaker locations enable access to appropriate wraparound services, case-management and psychosocial and wellbeing supports and healthcare that is responsive to the complex needs of young offenders both during participation in the program and upon reintegration into the community.
- Selection of a service provider that has a proven track record of successful service delivery working with vulnerable young people and attracting and maintaining appropriately qualified and experienced staff.
- Recognition of the high proportion of young First Nations offenders in custodial environments, particularly in North and Far North Queensland, and the need for culturally responsive care, supports and mentoring whilst in custodial care.
- Robust departmental oversight, monitoring and evaluation of Circuit Breaker program delivery and outcomes, including transparent public reporting of recidivism rates.
- Provision of a structured post program transition and aftercare support, including ongoing case management with connections to education, employment, housing and other community supports to maximise opportunity for successful reintegration and minimise reoffending rates.

We recognise that no child is born a criminal and that many young offenders come from complex, vulnerable backgrounds underpinned by dysfunction and entrenched disadvantage. Whilst important, policing and sentencing are just one component of the justice system and if we are to see real, generational change to the landscape of youth crime in Queensland, there needs to be significant investment in prevention and early intervention. Council urges the Queensland Government to consider further investment and policy reform related to:

- Expansion of place-based early intervention and prevention programs for vulnerable parents, families and young people that encourage pro-social and protective behaviours and reduce the instances and severity of antisocial behaviour in children and young people.
- Improving access to early diagnosis and treatment services, including for FASD and other disabilities and health conditions prevalent amongst children in contact with the youth justice system.
- Better understanding and implementation of protective measures to proactively address the correlation between contact with Queensland's child safety system, in particular residential care, and the youth justice system (AIHW, 2025).
- Service coordination and integration that provides consistent, evidence-based, therapeutic wrap around supports for young offenders that spans sentencing, incarceration, and reintegration.
- Greater connectivity and alignment between the policing, youth justice and judicial systems and sentencing frameworks to ensure custodial sentences allow a meaningful rehabilitative outcome and break the ongoing cycle of recidivism.

Cairns Regional Council is committed to supporting legislation that helps make our community safer and prioritises the rights of victims to feel safe in their homes and in our community. We strongly support the investment into alternative, rehabilitative detention models and encourage the Committee to carefully consider the feedback articulated in this submission. We look forward to continuing to work alongside the Queensland Government to address youth crime and protect Queensland communities from harm.

Yours sincerely



Cr Amy Eden
Mayor