

## POSITION STATEMENT – Youth Justice

### **A new approach is required to alter the youth justice trajectory - a call for effective, compassionate and evidence-based solutions**

In a time of increasing calls to stop the impacts and address the causes of young people offending, the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod advocates for effective, compassionate, and evidence-based solutions.

Systems that rely on incarceration for children and adults as a deterrent are harmful, expensive and ineffective. The Queensland Synod is concerned about the known harm caused by conditions for children and young people in watchhouses and detention centres and we note that incarcerating children and young people in Queensland costs the taxpayer \$1901 per child per day.

High levels of detention do not keep the community safe. Around eight in 10 children released from detention in Queensland return within 12 months. Research from around the world has shown that incarcerating children increases the chance that they will reoffend. In addition, incarceration does not address the root causes that leads children and young people to commit crimes.

Most repeat young offenders face a multitude of barriers to participating effectively in society, and are growing up in entrenched, intergenerational disadvantage. We need to address the complex and long-term causes and resource real long-term solutions.

We support addressing problematic behaviour by children through prevention and early intervention, intensive case management, and therapeutic responses to antisocial behaviour. Such an approach should be embedded across service systems such as education and training, child protection and disability services.

The Queensland Synod is a member of both the national #RaiseTheAge alliance and the Queensland Raise the Age Leadership Group. We are also committed to contributing to services and programs aimed at prevention and early intervention for children and young people and their families, who are experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

We recognise that there are significant community concerns related to children and young people who offend. There is a need for boundaries around and consequences for, certain behaviours, but we need to embed systemic responses that reduce offending and break cycles of violence, addiction, and socio-economic disadvantage. If we are able to assess and resource the necessary flexible and innovative support for children and young people early, we have a better chance of both reducing children and young people offending and increasing the wellbeing and security of the whole community.



Rev Bruce Moore  
**Moderator**