Insert your name here

Address here

Suburb, State and Postcode here

Insert name of MP here

Address of MP

Suburb, State and Postcode here

Dear (insert name of MP),

I am writing to you as my Local Member of Parliament about an issue of great importance to me, and our whole community. I am one of tens of thousands of people who is taking action because I want to live in a fair and compassionate community. As my local representative, I appreciate you hearing my concerns and responding with your commitment to help end the incarceration of children particularly Aboriginal children.

State and territory governments are responsible for prisons and police, and right now both are failing First Nations people in particular our children. I understand that across Australia we lock up children as young as 10 years old.

As you may be aware, Australia’s age of criminal responsibility is one of the lowest in the western world. Despite overwhelming evidence from health experts, social workers, Indigenous leaders, legal experts and human rights organisations, Australian Governments are choosing to lock up children as young as 10 – and ignoring tested community solutions that actually help kids.

Kids in prison are less likely to access what they need to grow up resilient, such as education, mentoring and community support. Health experts, social workers, Indigenous leaders and legal experts all have overwhelming evidence of the harm prison does – the very last thing we want for kids.

It is often the case that children caught up in criminal behaviour will have been severely let down by the adults and/or statutory agencies responsible for them and it cannot be just or fair to hold these children criminally responsible. What such children need is dedicated and consistent help and support to address the causes of their actions.

As well as being unjust, criminalising children as young as 10 is ineffective. Evidence shows that an introduction to the criminal justice system at such a young age is likely to lead to further offences.

Between 2018 and 2019, Australian Governments pushed almost 8,353 children aged 10, 11, 12 and 13 years through the criminal justice system, and 573 children under the age of 14 were in detention[[1]](#footnote-1). Applying criminal penalties to young children increases the likelihood they will get into trouble later in life, with children arrested before the age of 14 three times more likely than children arrested after 14 years to reoffend as adults[[2]](#footnote-2).

Between 2018 and 2019 Indigenous children made up 64% of 10–13 year old’s in prison. Raising the age of criminal responsibility is an important step to reducing the over-representation of Indigenous children in the Australian prison system[[3]](#footnote-3).

Children should be in their communities, connected with family and culture with cousins where they can learn and grow up healthy and strong. Prison does not benefit the children or our community. Instead of putting young children behind bars, governments must fund Aboriginal community-led solutions like Deadly Connections Community & Justice Services Inc, which focus on culture and supporting families/communities.

Yours sincerely,

(Insert name and signature here)

1. 2020, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Recorded Crime - Offenders, 2018-19, Youth Offenders, Supplementary Data Cube, Table 21, Cat No 4519.0, ABS, Canberra and 2020, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), Youth Justice in Australia 2018-19, ‘Table S78b: Young people in detention during the year by age, sex and Indigenous, Australia, 2018–19’, accessed 15 May 2020, available at https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-justice-in-australia-2018-19/data [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2017, Queensland Family & Child Commission, The age of criminal responsibility in Queensland, p.30, accessed 1 February 2020, available at https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.

   au/sites/default/files/Forpercent20professionals/policy/minimum-age-criminal-responsibility.pdf. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 2020, AIHW, Youth Justice in Australia 2018-19, ‘Table S80b: Young people in detention during the year by Indigenous status and age, states and territories, 2018–19’,

   accessed 12 February 2020, available athttps://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-justice-in-australia-2018-19/data. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)