

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**For immediate release 5 November 2016**

**ALHR Congratulates Queensland Parliament on Passing Laws to Stop Sending 17-Year-Olds to Adult Jails but Calls on the Government to Act to Protect Children Already in Custody.**

Australian lawyers for Human Rights (**ALHR**) congratulates the Queensland Parliament on passing laws late Thursday night that will see an end to 17-year-old children being sent to adult jails. However, ALHR is also calling on the Queensland Government to act immediately to protect children who are currently serving sentences in adult jails and to address deep systemic failures within Queensland's youth detention system.

ALHR Vice President Kerry Weste said "Last night's passage of the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation (Inclusion of 17-year-old Persons) Amendment Bill 2016* is a significant win for human rights in Queensland. We welcome the leadership shown by the Premier and Attorney General Yvette D'Ath in committing to courageously confront this longstanding violation of Queensland children's rights."

"ALHR notes that these changes represent a significant step in bringing Queensland into line with other Australian states and territories, none of whom treat 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal justice system. We commend this action as a positive step in Queensland's compliance with the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*."

Ms Weste continued, "We are, however, concerned that under the new provisions children who are currently serving sentences in adult jails will remain there. This means that they will continue to be exposed to inappropriate and damaging conditions in adult jails including sexual assault, violence and serious mental health issues. Every day that children remain incarcerated with adults in Queensland, Australia is in breach of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)*. ALHR calls on the Queensland Government to take swift action to protect these children now."

"Further," said Ms Weste, "in our recent submission to the Independent Review of Youth Detention in Queensland, ALHR noted that there remain very significant concerns over important aspects of the treatment of all children currently held in Queensland's prisons and youth detention facilities. Lateline and Amnesty International have exposed a culture of mistreatment of juveniles in detention, lack of proper oversight mechanisms and systemic failures within the Queensland youth justice system; all at the expense of Queensland's children. ALHR hopes that the Independent Review will lead to decisive action to put an end to the excessive use of force, solitary confinement, prohibited squatting and lifting, intimidation with dogs and will also address alarming rates of self harm and attempted suicide amongst children in detention in Queensland."

**To arrange an interview with ALHR President Benedict Coyne or ALHR Vice President Kerry Weste, please contact Matt Mitchell on 0431 980 365 or [media@alhr.org.au](mailto:media@alhr.org.au)**

For more information on Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, go to [www.alhr.org.au](http://www.alhr.org.au)