



YACWA Urges Greater Focus on Prevention in WA Labor's Youth Justice Reforms

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\$14.5 million package includes therapeutic courts and expedited trials, but YACWA urges focus on prevention and support for vulnerable youth.

In light of the recent announcement from the WA Labor Government to deliver a \$14.5 million package to address current issues in youth justice, YACWA is pleased to see the State Government's commitment to positive reforms and better outcomes for young people interacting with the system.

Premier Cook announced several measures yesterday, including expedited trial and bail processes for young offenders, curfew monitoring using "latest technology", penalties for responsible adults who fail to report breaches of bail, and the establishment of a therapeutic court in Armadale.

Whilst some of the reforms signal a positive shift, it is disappointing to see the continued use of language that feeds into negative perceptions of young people. YACWA CEO Antonella Segre encourages the State Government to prioritise measures that address the root cause of youth offending and meet the basic needs of vulnerable young people.

"We are pleased to see progress towards a more therapeutic and rehabilitative approach to youth justice, namely the announcement of the therapeutic court to be established in Armadale," said Ms. Segre. "We look forward to hearing more detail as to how this model will operate."

YACWA supports the principles outlined in the *Blueprint for a Better Future* by Social Reinvestment WA and encourages the government to allocate resources towards meeting young people's basic needs as a preventative measure. Redirecting funds to community-led support and early intervention would yield greater long-term benefits for young people. The underlying issues faced need to be addressed. Many young people involved in the justice system have experienced complex trauma and should have their wellbeing supported rather than punitive measures enforced.

"Future reforms must prioritise prevention and early intervention, to ensure young people are diverted away from the justice system altogether." Ms. Segre added.

"Lowering the number of young people who encounter the justice system will benefit not just those young people - many of whom are vulnerable and have complex histories - but the entire community."

YACWA believes youth justice approaches should focus on rehabilitative and therapeutic measures. While this announcement marks some positive steps, more needs to be done to support young people and reduce their contact with the justice system. There is a pertinent need for the government to commit to systemic reform, ensuring the entire youth justice framework is designed to address underlying causes of offending and provide pathways for young people to achieve positive outcomes.



“We remain committed to working closely with the State Government to ensure that all young people in WA, particularly those most vulnerable, have access to the support they need to thrive.” Ms. Segre concluded.

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End of Release