

Young people in detention being held for longer without trial

October 2 2014, by Rob Kidd



QUT researchers have warned of the implications of holding young people without trial.

About three-quarters of young people in detention in Queensland are being held without trial for an average of more than a month.

QUT School of Justice researchers Dr Kelly Richards and Dr Angela Dwyer have warned of the implications of holding young people without conviction after a draft report on youth detention in Queensland revealed the use of remand increased by 30 per cent between 2011/12 and 2012/13.

Dr Richards said the proportion of young people on remand had grown significantly over the past three years from 67 per cent in 2010/11 to 78 per cent in 2012/13.

"And the average length of time spent on remand also increased from 29 days in 2011/12 to 35 days in 2013/14," Dr Richards, who last year co-authored a national research project on bail and remand for young people in Australia, said.

"It is important to recognise that while there is often a public perception that young people have it easy in detention, most of them have not even been convicted of an offence."

Young people in detention would be confronted with numerous issues, Dr Richards said, including separation from family and friends, dislocation from education and employment and potential mental health problems.

Dr Dwyer said youth workers working in detention had raised concerns there was a lack of "through care" for young people.

"For instance, one of the policies is that outside of work hours, the workers are not to have any contact with the young people," she said.

"If they are working as mentors for example, while the young people are incarcerated, there needs to be that form of mentoring happening when they exit detention too."

To reduce the number of young people held on remand, Dr Richards said it was important to explore alternative ways of dealing with [young offenders](#).

"Many young people in detention could be dealt with effectively in the

community," she said.

"This is especially the case for some of those on custodial remand, which places young people in limbo and often without access to various programs available in youth detention as they haven't been convicted.

"It is important to minimise custodial remand where possible and magistrates need more options in dealing with young people, including treatment options for young people with alcohol or drug dependency and [mental health problems](#)."

Dr Dwyer said it was vital to "invest heavily and wisely" in different ways to engage and supervise young people in their communities.

"The sad fact is there are probably many [young people](#) who don't need to be in detention on remand but they are there simply because they have nowhere else to go," she said.

More information: The report is available online:
www.aic.gov.au/media_library/p...s/rpp/125/rpp125.pdf

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: Young people in detention being held for longer without trial (2014, October 2)
retrieved 18 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2014-10-young-people-detention-held-longer.html>

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