

Young people need bail, not the lock-up without trial, to avoid future crime

June 4 2015, by Niki Widdowson

Bail support programs are needed to combat Queensland's high rate of locking up young people in custodial remand where they are schooled into higher level crimes, says Dr Kelly Richards from QUT's School of Justice.

Dr Richards said Queensland was the only state that had had a recent substantial increase in the number and rate of [young people](#) on custodial remand.

"Of the young people in detention in Queensland, 72 per cent are on custodial remand, as against the national average of 51 per cent on remand," Dr Richards said

"One way of reducing the number of young people in remand could be to support them to complete [bail](#) orders.

"This rate of incarceration of young people not convicted of a crime must be addressed, as Queensland is the only jurisdiction in Australia without legislation to ensure detention of young people is used only as a last resort, according to our obligations to a number of UN conventions.

"Even though they have not been convicted of a crime, young people are sometimes put with convicted offenders where it has been shown they are likely to be schooled in criminality."

Dr Richards said the high rate of incarceration of youth in custodial

remand was not only costing the community millions of dollars, it was also not backed by research showing it actually increased community safety.

She said the increase in remand for young people was partly due to the government's eagerness to show it was tough on crime.

"They argue that young people have been getting off lightly, but somehow other states are reducing their rate of custodial remand," Dr Richards said.

"Research clearly shows custodial remand has harmful effects on young people that impede their chances for education and employment, separates them from their family and community.

"As well as being exposed to sentenced young offenders, young people on remand often do not have access to programs that could help them combat turning to crime, and have an increased chance of being remanded again.

"We could address the rate of incarcerated young people with better bail support programs services.

"We have some programs running in Queensland but few have been evaluated.

"Other measures include enhancing young people's access to bail in regional areas and better supporting young people with complex needs.

"Bail support referrals should be available to all bail decision-makers, not just the courts."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

Citation: Young people need bail, not the lock-up without trial, to avoid future crime (2015, June 4) retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2015-06-young-people-bail-lock-up-trial.html>

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