



## Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission

Media Release

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### NT Legal Aid Supports increase to age of criminal responsibility

The NT Legal Aid Commission (NT Legal Aid) joins the NT Council of Social Services (NTCOSS), Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) and other services in the NT in supporting moves to legislate for an increase in the age of criminal responsibility to 12 in the NT.

NT Legal Aid Director, Annmarie Lumsden said the commitment by the NT Government to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 is a positive first step and a watershed moment which establishes an important precedent for Australia.

‘The experience of Legal Aid commissions representing children around Australia, is that they are harmed by the criminal justice system. Imprisonment of children is cruel and often not a deterrent. Rather, it leads to longer term entrenchment with the justice system and reoffending.’ Ms Lumsden said

‘The majority of children in prisons have experienced trauma and / or mental health issues. We should be orienting away from costly criminal justice responses for children under 12, towards services that address children’s circumstances and help them grow and learn.’

‘The later children enter the justice system the less likely they are to reoffend. Conversely, evidence shows that the earlier children enter the criminal justice system the more likely they are to become stuck in the system and repeat harmful behaviours.’

Ms Lumsden pointed to International benchmarks set by the UN Committee in the Rights of the Child which states that the age of criminal responsibility should be at least 14. The international community has already moved to raise the age and it is at least 14 in 86 countries. Ms Lumsden said that NT Legal Aid is committed to work with the NT Government towards the age of criminal responsibility being raised to 14 years of age.

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