



National Commission for  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Children and Young People

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## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Statement attributable to Australia's first National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, Sue-Anne Hunter.**

Last night, Thursday 4 December, the Victorian Government passed cruel legislation that will allow children as young as 14 to be tried in adult courts and face life sentences for serious violent crimes.

Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will face the consequences of this new legislation at a disproportionate rate to their peers.

These new laws violate Australia's obligations under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* which state that detention as punishment should only be used as a last resort and for the shortest period possible.

Treating 14-year-olds as adults in criminal proceedings, removing the principle of detention as a last resort, and imposing potential life sentences directly contravenes these obligations and removes the human rights protections that are meant to protect our most vulnerable.

In 2023, the Victorian Government's own truth-telling inquiry, led by the Yoorrook Justice Commission, recommended raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14 and prohibiting detention for children under 16. Victoria is now doing the opposite.

Passing this legislation is more than a policy failure by the Victorian Government. It's a moral failure that will have a resounding impact for the next generation and beyond.

Our children deserve better - and this Government has chosen to deliver worse.

**ENDS**

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