



#RaiseTheAge
New South Wales

Media release

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Leading Organisations come together to #RaiseTheAge in NSW

A coalition has come together in NSW to call on the NSW Government to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14.

The group includes First Nations organisations, legal and human rights organisations, peak bodies in the non-government sector and unions. They bring a deep understanding of the impact of criminalising children along with the expertise and experience to help us to do better.

The group represents the services, communities and front-line workers who can build a better way for our children and our communities.

If we want better outcomes for young people and a safer community, we need to stop doing things that don't work. Dragging children as young as ten through police stations and courts, strip-searching them and locking them up causes harm and fails to deliver on community safety.

Across Australia, governments are taking small steps to #RaiseTheAge – but these steps are not good enough. In NSW, we can raise the age to 14 to make our communities safer through evidence-informed and community-led responses and alternatives.

The Raise the Age coalition will work with a broader partner network of community groups and organisations committed to raising the age in NSW. Together, we are building support to deliver a clear message: the NSW Government must step up and work with communities to do better.

It's time to build the alternatives and raise the age in NSW - for the good of our kids and our communities.

The Raise the Age Lead Group in NSW is:

- Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited
- AbSec – the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation
- Amnesty International Australia
- ANTAR
- Australian Services Union NSW&ACT (Services) Branch
- Community Legal Centres NSW
- Just Reinvest NSW
- Justice Reform Initiative
- New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
- NSW Council for Civil Liberties (NSWCCL)
- NSW Teachers Federation
- Public Interest Advocacy Centre
- Youth Action

Organisations and supporters are invited to join the NSW campaign at:
www.raisetheagensw.org.au

NSW Raise the Age works collaboratively with campaigns and activities in other states and territories as part of the [national campaign to raise the age](#).

Quotes attributable to Emily Mayo, Campaign Coordinator, Raise the Age NSW

'Criminalising children causes them harm and what we do now hurts kids, families and communities.'

'Services, communities and workers are coming together in NSW to support raising the age because we know the issues, understand the problems and can build the alternatives.'

'The NSW Government has a unique opportunity to show leadership by partnering with these organisations and investing in models that are better for kids and better for communities.'

'The facts are well established. What we do now does not work. The NSW Government must show the political will to build a better way – with us.'

Quotes from Lead Group Leaders

Quotes attributable to Karly Warner, CEO of the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited

'Children belong in schools, playgrounds and at home with their families – not in police lock-up and prisons. In NSW and across Australia, the legal system traps Aboriginal children at a far higher rate than non-Indigenous kids.'

'The Aboriginal Legal Service, with the Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations of NSW, is proud to partner with the NSW Government on Closing the Gap in NSW. Together, we're working to ensure policies impacting the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are developed in full and genuine partnership and that we reduce the rate of Aboriginal children in custody by 30%.'

'Raising the age of legal responsibility to 14 is a sensible and evidence-backed step to 'achieving this goal, and we are calling on the NSW Government to get it done without delay.'

Quotes attributable to Mindy Sotiri, Executive Director, Justice Reform Initiative

'There is overwhelming evidence that 14 is the minimum age, developmentally and neurologically, that children could or should be held criminally responsible. There is also overwhelming evidence that early contact with police *increases* the likelihood of ongoing criminal justice system involvement.'

'If we want to build safer communities, rather than 'managing' children in the justice system, we need to invest in community led alternatives. There is an opportunity right now for both sides of politics in NSW to show real leadership in Raising the Age to 14 and committing to resourcing the evidence-based alternatives that we know will build a safer community for everybody.'

Quotes attributable to Geoffrey Winters, CEO, Just Reinvest NSW

'Just Reinvest NSW (JR NSW) supports Aboriginal communities to develop their own solutions for change, making them safer and more just. Our goal is to reduce Aboriginal People's interactions with the criminal justice system.'

'Criminalising young people under the age of 14 often leads to life-long involvement with the criminal justice system, causing inter-generational hurt and trauma for the young person, their families and the entire community.'

'Raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 is an opportunity to stop this involvement and invest in placed-based solutions that are not only better for the welfare of our kids and their families, but will also build safer communities.'

Quotes attributable to John Leha, CEO, AbSec – the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation

'AbSec is the peak organisation for Aboriginal children and families in NSW. Our vision is that all Aboriginal children and young people are looked after in safe, thriving Aboriginal families and communities and are raised strong in spirit and identity, with every opportunity for lifelong wellbeing and connection to culture.'

'Echoing calls for reform from our members, our kids and our communities across the state, raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old without exception will make a profound difference for all children and all communities across New South Wales.'

Quotes attributable to Jonathon Hunyor, CEO, Public Interest Advocacy Centre

'It's time for the NSW Government to recognise that what we're doing now harms children and fails our communities. To get out of this hole, we need to stop digging.'

'If we want better outcomes we need to get serious about solutions.'

'The Raise the Age coalition brings together health and justice specialists, community groups and frontline workers: the people who have the experience in what works and are committed to working with government to build a system that delivers for our communities.'

Quotes attributable to Ben McAlpine, Director of Policy & Advocacy, NCOSS

'NCOSS is proud to join with other leading organisations in NSW to support raising the age of criminal responsibility, so we can deliver better outcomes for kids, families, and communities.'

'Children thrive when they are supported, nurtured and loved. Criminalising kids causes them harm, further entrenches intergenerational disadvantage, and is unacceptable in an equitable, fair society.'

Quotes attributable to Jan Primrose, Deputy Secretary, ASU

‘The Australian Services Union is the largest union representing workers throughout the community and disability services sectors across NSW.’

‘ASU members work in almost every non-government organisation with any level of responsibility for the protection of children and young people: out of home care, refuges, housing, tenancy and homelessness services, community legal services, services for First Nations and LGBTIQ+ communities, health, mental health, family violence and sexual assault services, alcohol and other drugs and disability services.’

‘ASU members are uniquely placed to understand the importance of this reform for children and young people – and for the community.’

Quote attributable to Kate Munro, CEO, Youth Action

‘Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. It is time for us to raise the age in NSW. Our member services are part of communities across NSW. We invite the NSW Government to work with us because know we can build a better way for young people and communities.’

Quote attributable to Peter Lewis, National Director, ANRAR

‘ANRAR stands for justice, rights and respect for Australia’s First Nations Peoples. We mobilise allies and supporters to back-in work that can deliver for First Nations people. Raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility is a matter of justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. First Nations children are disproportionately impacted by being criminalised, and this is an injustice. NSW and every state should raise the age to at least 14 years old.’

Quotes attributable to Katrina Ironside, Executive Director, CLCNSW

‘Community Legal Centres NSW is the peak body of 41 community legal centres. We advocate for law reform and social justice, so our society and laws are just, fair and inclusive. Every child should be free to go to school, have a safe home to live in, and be supported to live with their community and family.’

‘Children under the age of 14 should not be coming into contact with the criminal justice system. Our centres see the ongoing negative impacts of criminalising children and young people. We must invest in our communities and stop punitive approaches that simply don’t work.’

Quotes attributable to Henry Rajendra, Acting President, NSW Teachers Federation

‘Children don’t belong in detention. Children should be thriving in school; learning and play is the work of childhood. NSW public schools need to be adequately resourced and staffed to deliver the best for kids who are most in need of extra support. This means more school counsellors, more teachers and more specialist programs where and when they are needed.’

‘Expanded public preschool provision and early intervention health and education services for at-risk kids and their families are vital. Our focus needs to be keeping kids in school and keeping kids away from the criminal justice system.’

ENDS

Media Contact: Dan Buhagiar 0478 739 280 – press@raisetheagensw.org.au

Emily Mayo and representatives of the Lead Group are available for comment and interview.

Join the campaign here: www.raisetheagensw.org.au

