

13 July 2026

Submission regarding: Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026

Dear Justice, Integrity and Community Safety Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide PeakCare's submission on the *Youth Justice (Circuit Breaker) Amendment Bill 2026* (the Bill).

PeakCare is the peak body representing organisations that work to improve the safety, wellbeing and life outcomes of Queensland's children, young people and families. Our members deliver prevention and early intervention, family support, out-of-home care, residential care and child protection services across Queensland, supporting many of the children and young people who also come into contact with the youth justice system.

PeakCare recognises the Queensland Government's commitment to improving community safety and reducing serious repeat offending by children and young people. We also acknowledge that some children require intensive interventions to interrupt the patterns of offending and create opportunities for positive change. Our interest in this Bill is whether the proposed legislative framework provides sufficient safeguards to ensure that, where the State exercises significant control over a child's liberty, the intervention is evidence-informed, rights based, culturally safe and genuinely therapeutic.

The proposed Circuit Breaker Program represents a significant intervention in the lives of children and young people. While it is intended as an alternative to detention, children subject to a Circuit Breaker Order will experience significant restrictions on their liberty for up to six months. This engages Australia's obligations under *the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*¹ and the *Human Rights Act 2019* (Qld),² which require that children deprived of their liberty are treated with humanity and dignity, retain their rights to education, healthcare, family and cultural connection, and receive interventions that support their rehabilitation and reintegration. Accordingly, PeakCare considers these protections should be reflected as minimum legislative or statutory standards for every Circuit Breaker Program, rather than left to provider discretion. This is especially the case for access to education, which is currently listed as an option in program design when it must be a mandatory requirement.

Many children likely to participate in the Circuit Breaker Program have experienced significant trauma, disability, educational disengagement, family violence or child protection involvement. Effective responses must therefore move beyond behaviour management to provide evidence-informed therapeutic care that addresses children's developmental needs while promoting accountability and rehabilitation. This therapeutic approach must extend beyond the current proposal of 'intensive and practice support for children, including...education, training and mentoring'. The success of the model will depend on procurement processes that prioritise providers with demonstrated expertise in trauma-informed practice, safeguarding, cultural capability and multidisciplinary service delivery.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain significantly overrepresented in Queensland's youth justice system. For these children, connection to family, kin, community, culture and Country are well-established protective factors that support identity, wellbeing and rehabilitation. Given the proposed use of rural and remote sites, the Bill should provide stronger safeguards to maintain these connections and ensure suitability assessments explicitly consider disability, trauma, mental health, cultural identity and family circumstances before a Circuit Breaker Order is made.

¹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989. [Convention on the Rights of the Child | OHCHR](#).

² Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld). [Human Rights Act 2019 - Queensland Legislation - Queensland Government](#).

Queensland has previously invested in a residential intervention with similar objectives through the Youth Boot Camp program. While the proposed Circuit Breaker Program differs in several respects, the independent evaluation of the Youth Boot Camp model provides an important evidence base for the Committee's consideration. The evaluation concluded that while intensive interventions remained appropriate for some young people, stronger therapeutic programming, family engagement, community integration and transition planning were required to achieve sustainable behavioural change. It also highlighted practical barriers associated with remote locations, including reduced opportunities for family involvement and community connection. These findings remain highly relevant to the Committee's consideration of the current Bill.

For PeakCare, this raises an important question: how has the proposed Circuit Breaker Program been designed differently to address the lessons identified through Queensland's previous experience?

We encourage the Committee to ensure that Queensland's previous experience informs both the legislative framework and the operational design of the Circuit Breaker Program so that the same shortcomings are not repeated.

To strengthen the Bill, PeakCare recommends the Committee consider five key areas:

1. Establishing a minimum age of entry of 16 years old.
2. Prescribing minimum rights-based standards that every Circuit Breaker Program must provide, including education, healthcare, therapeutic intervention, meaningful family contact where safe, cultural connection and independent advocacy.
3. Strengthening the suitability assessment process by prescribing the matters that must be considered, including disability, trauma, mental health, cultural identity and family circumstances.
4. Ensuring procurement processes prioritise providers with demonstrated therapeutic expertise, safeguarding capability and cultural competence.
5. Establishing independent implementation and evaluation arrangements that measure outcomes beyond recidivism, including children's wellbeing, education, cultural connection and successful reintegration to the community.
6. Ensuring the Circuit Breaker Program operates only as an alternative to detention and is not available as a bail option.

We recognise and welcome the Government's commitment to improving community safety and reducing serious repeat offending by children and young people. The proposed Circuit Breaker Program presents an opportunity to provide a genuinely therapeutic alternative to detention. By strengthening the legislative safeguards outlined above, the Committee can help ensure the model is evidence-informed, culturally responsive, protects children's rights and supports successful reintegration into the community.

Yours sincerely,



Kelly Jebb

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