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# Listen: This is my voice”

Young people’s experiences  
of the youth justice system.



## CONTENT WARNING:

This project is about the experiences of young people in Tasmania’s youth justice system. Some of their experiences include references to family violence, drug use and abuse. Some young people used strong language to describe these experiences. Readers might find the content of this report distressing. The services listed below can be contacted for support:

- **1800 RESPECT:** 1800 737 732
- **Family Violence Counselling Support Service:** 1800 608 122
- **Blue Knot (childhood and complex trauma support):** 1300 657 380
- **13YARN for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:** 13 92 76
- **A Tasmanian Lifeline:** 1800 984 434
- **Lifeline:** 13 11 14
- **Kids Helpline:** 1800 55 1800

## **Acknowledgement of Country**

I acknowledge and pay my respects to the palawa people of lutruwita/Tasmania as the original and ongoing custodians of this land and for the more than 40,000 years they have cared for their country and their children. I recognise that Aboriginal people are best placed to determine and deliver services to meet the needs of their children.

## **Other Acknowledgements**

I wish to thank the young Tasmanians with experience of the criminal justice system who have bravely shared their stories for this report. Your unique insights and views inform my advocacy on behalf of all children and young people in the state. I would also like to thank the staff of the Department for Education, Children and Young People (and the former Department of Communities) and non-government organisations for supporting young people to participate.

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Any questions regarding this report or the work of Tasmania's Commissioner for Children and Young People more generally may be directed to the Commissioner by email to [childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au](mailto:childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au) or by telephoning +61 3 6166 1366.

For more information, visit: [www.childcomm.tas.gov.au](http://www.childcomm.tas.gov.au).

# Introduction

This report, **Listen: This is my voice**, is the first output of my **Voices of Young People in the Youth Justice System Project (Voices Project)**. The **Voices Project** gives young people, with recent lived experience of the Tasmanian youth justice system, an opportunity to share their views on how this system works and to have those views listened to and taken seriously by the community and government decision-makers.

Young people were asked about what it is like for young people to get into trouble with the law for the first time and other topics including arrest, diversion, bail, remand, detention and leaving detention.

**Listen: This is my voice** is about how young people with a youth justice experience view the factors affecting young people's first and ongoing contact with the law, and how we can better support young people who are at risk of offending.



There needs to be more people listening like you because they take it in and as you're listening, they say something to other people so they listen. Not a lot of people sit down and listen like you. They just sit there and oh yeah, right, this and that and this, you know? They don't listen."

## What is my role?

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As Commissioner for Children and Young People, I advocate for all Tasmanian children and young people, but also have a special function to advocate for any young person detained under the **Youth Justice Act 1997**. I promote good practice, policy, and legislation by influencing decision-making, undertaking research, monitoring, publishing reports, providing advice to ministers and government agencies, undertaking investigations, and making submissions to inquiries and reviews. I make comments on draft legislation and on proposed policies, including on national issues that are relevant to children and young people in Tasmania.

In February 2022, the Advocate for Young People in Detention began supporting me to carry out my advocacy for young people in youth justice detention. The additional position of the Advocate has helped young people to have better access to regular face-to-face support. This means problems can be identified and responded to more effectively.

## How did we do this work?

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Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 young people aged between 15 and 19 years, with current or previous contact with the youth justice system. The young people were male and female, with nearly half of the 12 young people interviewed identifying as Aboriginal, and one quarter from the north and three-quarters from the south of the state.

The interviews were conducted by the Advocate for Young People in Detention and were designed to encourage respectful and trusting interactions with young people.

This project is about what young people have to say about the youth justice system in their own words.

This report is written for all the young people we spoke to because it is their voices being shared.



## Background

The Tasmanian Government has developed a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy ***It Takes a Tasmanian Village*** (the Strategy). The Strategy aims to improve the situation of children and young people in Tasmania. It has six main areas where the Government would like to see change; being loved, safe and valued; having material basics; being healthy; learning; participating; and having a positive sense of culture and identity. The Tasmanian Government has committed to providing children and young people with what they need to grow and thrive, alongside their families and communities.

The Tasmanian Government is developing a new plan for youth justice in Tasmania for the next ten years. The ***Final Draft Youth Justice Blueprint*** (the Blueprint) aims to strengthen the supports for children, young people and their families by promoting wellbeing, and helping children and young people avoid coming into the youth justice system. If children and young people don't have everything they need to grow and thrive, it sometimes means that they end up in the youth justice system. Once young people are in the system, it is harder for some of them to get out.

The Tasmanian Government has said it will raise the minimum age of detention for children to 14 years however, the minimum age at which children can be charged with a crime is 10 years old.

This is not good enough. Children under the age of 14 should not be in the criminal justice system. If a child does something wrong, we should address their needs and support their family to care for them. If we are successful at addressing the underlying reasons for the behaviour, it is more likely they won't do it again.

In my view, achieving this means that as a community, we need to value and support children, including those with harmful behaviours. If we continue to default to the youth justice system for children as young as 10, we accept that some children are somehow less deserving of support, care, and attention.

The stories of the young people in this report, describe how young people have been let down by the systems and supports that should have been there to help them. This is not good enough. We need to do better to ensure all children and young people have what they need to grow and thrive.

# What we heard

Young people told us about some of the reasons why young people might engage in criminal behaviour and come into contact with the law. Many of the young people spoke about being let down, by their families, by services, and by the youth justice system itself. These young people fell through the cracks of the systems that were meant to support them and their families, and provide for their basic needs, particularly when their families couldn't. What young people told us demonstrates the need for systems and services that recognise risk, are available and accessible to young people, and provide sustained support for as long as the young person needs it.



When we spoke to young people, we gave them the option of using a 'made up story' of a young person called 'Harley'. This allowed them to share their views without referring to their own experience.

In this report, each young person has been given a name that is not their real name to avoid them being identified.

## Family and community

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Family and community mattered a lot to the young people we spoke to. They spoke about their relationships with families and friends, and their home and community environment as influencing their contact with the law. For some young people situations at home, such as family violence, led to them becoming involved in crime.

*Maybe he's watching his Dad hitting his Mum, or something like that. Or he's getting hit by his Dad, or something like that. He would have that inner rage and just wants to take it out on the world. You know what I mean? It's not as simple as, oh he went in there - like it is pretty simple - he went in there, stole a chocolate, charge him.*

(Joe, 18-year-old male)

*We got the house and then, I don't know, we started fighting me and me mum, over me dad. Then she just started kicking me out, and I'd sleep in the front doorstep. So, it got to a point where, you know, fuck this, I ain't sleeping on the doorstep. So I just got out and started wandering around and got introduced to crime. It just leads up one after another, you know what I mean? Once you get the hang of it, it's just your life, I guess. Some people can't get out of it.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

For some young people, it was a lack of supportive relationships at home that led to feelings of rejection, and without that support, doing crime to survive.

*See for me I don't even know if having my mother directly there to support me would have even helped, because she wasn't - she was always there yes, but she wasn't - she never became the person that I would talk to and I think she became merely just the owner of the house I was in and the food provider and I guess the one that supported me, not - in the end, before I had to move out, she didn't even feel like my mother. I didn't have the bond with her - I didn't feel like I had the bond with her anymore to be like, oh, that's my mother. It was just kind of like, oh, that's my mother because that's what it says on the paper. I think for me specifically I didn't lose that connection, so I don't think either way if I was in a care home or there, it would have done anything beneficial.*

(Jack, 19-year-old male)

*Because like some kids, they don't have nice clothes or caring parents or a caring family or anywhere to stay like. That's why that leads to doing stuff to survive.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

Not having a supportive family also meant that it could be hard to know right from wrong.

*Yeah, but if he's going out and doing bad things, he's only got himself to blame...Unless he's had a hard life, or unless he's got a reason to go do a crime or go and break the law, it's his fault, really, because he's the one doing it...*

*Well, unless like he doesn't got family and people to support him, then obviously, you go and do bad things...*

*Because he's got no support and he's got no one to care about him, and he's probably got no one to tell him right from wrong, so he doesn't know. So he thinks breaking the law's okay, but really, it's not.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

For some young people, the situation at home was a catalyst for getting into drugs and hanging out with the wrong people. This led to them committing crime.

*Especially for someone like me that's grown up to not have a dad, he's always been in jail, being with me mum always doing it hard, kicking me out. Then I don't get on the meth or nothing, but I had a very bad addiction to dope, very bad addiction. That's my drug...but no, I was with me mates having sessions and we'd have nothing, you know. We'd get stressed, or I'd get stressed, I wouldn't be able to sleep. So that then leads to crime. Then that crime leads to obviously being getting locked up, and it leads from there and it's sort of repeat really.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

*That's how I felt the first time when I did it. So I didn't feel like I had family or a home to go to, so I just went out and used drugs as another way of coping and going smoking ice and that. Thought that was better than going home because I didn't want to argue with my family or punch on with my mum and my dad. I just wanted to - I didn't want to go home. I just wanted to be by myself and smoke drugs all the time.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

*I don't know, because your parents are cunts. They start drinking, fucking fighting each other, you don't want to see it, so you fuck off...A bad childhood, you fuck off, hang around with older people, start smoking dope and get on the other drugs.*

(Alex, 17-year-old male)

The use of drugs was seen by some young people as a way to escape their lives and to look 'cool' to those around them.

*Some young people they lead on to the older people like us and think it's cool smoking drugs. I thought it was cool smoking drugs because my brother smoked drugs and other people did. Looking at it now, I've got a drug habit...*

*Yeah, the people around me. Like I thought it was so cool when I was young and the people were smoking drugs. Looked up to them and looked up to a couple of my family members and thought it was cool. Now it's not that good. It's not cool. It's not cool to have a drug habit because it just gets you in trouble. You get locked up. You just break your family apart and you got no home to go to. You can be homeless and have to sleep in bushes and find places to stay and stuff like that. It's bad. So it's what I've learnt.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

James went on to say that drugs caused him so much pain and led to the breakdown of relationships, particularly with his family.

*Like you go and get in mad trouble and that's the most thing that I've done. Used so many drugs, I don't remember what I've done. Or if I've gone and steal cars or you know? That's why I used drugs and I don't remember what I've done. So that's why using drugs is second because it's bad. It's real bad. It breaks up your family. That's what broke my family is drugs... Because it's the worst thing I've ever done and I was alone. Just can't get off the drugs. It's the worst thing I've ever done in my life. It's a nightmare.*

(James, 15-year-old male)



## Peer groups

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Most of the young people we spoke to talked about peer groups as both a risk and protective factor for young people getting involved in criminal behaviour. Some young people were introduced to a peer group while at Ashley Youth Detention Centre (AYDC). This made it harder to keep out of trouble after they left detention.

*Hangin' around the wrong people, because there's a quote that once said, if you hang around five junkies, you'll become the sixth. If you hang around five billionaires, you'll become the sixth.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

*Well, for me, when I was in at Ashley's, honestly it all led to me mates. Getting out, meeting up, saying, oh we've got no money, help me out, blah, blah, blah. You go out and do crime don't ya, and then you get re-introduced back into it...It's hard decision to say no, you know what I mean, because obviously you're going to be back out together soon anyway. But like I said, there's just some people that want to get out, do the right thing, but then get introduced back to the crime because of their mates. It's very hard to try and work around it.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

Lucas did go on to say that after leaving AYDC he went to a shelter, which despite being a good environment, led to him meeting up with other young people who had also just left AYDC.

*So look, the day that I got out of Ashley's that day and I went up to that, you introduced me to...the shelter, that was a fucking filth place. I'm not joking, mate...But then you get bad influences that get out of Ashley's and then come in, and then get all the little kids to start doing crime again. So they're on top. You know what I mean? With the population side. You just got to try to keep the bad ones away from the good ones.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

Young people also spoke about how friends could be a positive influence and how hanging out with the right peer group could help them stay out of trouble with the law.



*Hang around their age group that actually go to school and find some real friends that are actual all good to go hang around with. Just go to school and find some better friends to go hang around with because I don't go to school and most younger people I hang around with don't go to school.*

*They hang around a lot older people and a lot of bad things will happen to you or someone else you hang with, if you hang around with older people like that. Like you get shot at or you end up shooting someone or something like that.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

*Well, in Harley's instance, you don't really know that you're hanging around the bad people until you get caught up, and you get caught up to a point that you don't think there's no fixing it, when you don't have support people there and that. So I don't really know what could fix it. Just choose his friends wisely, I suppose.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

Some young people talked about how saying no to peer pressure was a way for young people to protect themselves from getting involved in drugs and crime.

*Saying no. Like when someone says, [do you want a bong] and something like that. Yeah it's fun at the time but at the end of the day, it fucks your life up. [You have a lot] of friends, even if they do crime. But don't drag you into it. Everyone's going to have a friend who does crime or smokes dope or drinks alcohol all the time.*

(Liam, 16-year-old male)

Young people didn't speak a lot about education as a protective factor, although some mentioned that by going to school, young people might be able to change their peer group.

*Good friends, just meet new people. Go to school and I suppose meet new people.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

*Just go to school. If they're old enough, about my age, try and get your pay on and don't go do criminal stuff to go make your money. If you go get your Centrelink on, it feels great to walk out of a shop...knowing that you can buy yourself as much as you want and clothes and shoes and they're brand new, anything, and you walk out with a smile on your face without having to steal anything. It feels great.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

## The right kind of support

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Young people said that having the right kind of support was a way to help young people not engage in criminal behaviour. Some of the young people spoke about the importance of having a mentor or someone to hang out with who could provide stability and support, particularly when things were difficult at home.

*Someone that's there to help you through the good and bad times, someone there just to support you in your life and teach you the right way about life and give you the best life you can...*

*So if he was doing the wrong thing, if he was to go out and do the wrong thing, he's got a support person there to help him, so that's like a barrier, your support person. Whereas if he does - if he just hangs around the wrong people, he's going to go out and steal and do bad things and egg houses, but he doesn't have barriers there. He doesn't have people to help him.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

Jack said that the most important thing was having a mentor who understood who you were, and approached you as a supportive peer.

*Their [mentor's] attitudes towards me and how they treated me as a person...the two workers specifically I got from [organisation], how they treated me as a person I grew to like them very quickly and I think in many ways they replaced the parental aspect I'd lost and...don't know...For the most part it just felt like, I don't know, having - I guess just sort of similar to just having a friend show up. It didn't feel like what they were actually there for.*

(Jack, 19-year-old male)

*There used to be a fella that used to come pick up me and the mates that are trying to stay out of trouble and go do activities with us and or have a barbecue, just go out for the day. Stuff like that, you know? Keeps your mind off crime for sure.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

For other young people, the right kind of support looked like a place young people could go to find professionals who could help them get back on track.

*Like for a facility for people - for young people to - people to actually talk to that will listen and will take in how they feel and help them get off drugs. Help them get a place if they don't got a home to go to or you're homeless. Have like - like psychologists to talk to how you've... like how you feel and how you feel depressed or got anxiety. Like people like that and like they need a facility like that for people so they can just go when they want to or go and talk to someone [whatever time of the day] when they're feeling sad and they can feel better. Let it out and somewhere to go sleep where they feel safe and stuff like that. Because they don't got a lot of people like that around here or facilities like that. They only got like Boys' Home and stuff like that."*

(James, 15-year-old male)

*Yeah, well I think there needs to be more. Hundred per cent because there's not many places where kids can actually explain how they feel all the time. Some people don't want to go to places like Headspace and that because they think that's just for depression and that but it's for all sorts of things. That's what they need a facility for. Like places to go and sleep when they got nothing to eat and food. You know? Places like that.*

**(James, 15-year-old male)**

Young people described how a network of professionals should include access to mental health support and someone to talk to in a space where they feel comfortable and safe to be themselves.

*But at the end of the day, we need to think - we need more mental health help, in my opinion. We do need it, because half of these crimes wouldn't be committed if - maybe if they just, instead of sending them away, they're like right, you're going to rehab for a bit. Or even they send them to jail, and they go to the ward bit. You know what I mean?*

**(Joe, 18-year-old male)**

*I'd say talking to someone, but that doesn't always help. I don't really like talking to people, but sometimes it helps, sometimes it doesn't...It depends really. Whoever you feel comfortable around, whoever you feel like, can help.*

**(Liam, 16-year-old male)**



## Lives at home worse than in detention

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Several young people spoke about how life on the outside was harder than life in detention, and said this motivated them to commit crime.

*I don't know, I felt like nothing could help me when I was out. That's why I just - when I got arrested, I said take me to Ashley's, I want to go sleep and eat. I want to be in here with people that I can have a laugh with and you know? Yeah.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

*Then he might get locked up and then he would have a safe place to stay. Then the cycle just keeps going on because he thinks to himself, well if he gets locked up it's not the worst thing because of what Harley is going through. Harley is like, it's better being locked up than living on the street.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

Boredom and lack of good supports in the community were mentioned as reasons that some young people might continue to offend.

*Well, for me, as soon as I know I'm getting bail, I'm happy as. It's a big relief. Then you get out there and you think, I'm not going to fuck up. I'm not going to fuck up. You know what I mean? Get out of there, first couple of nights, you're fine, and it's all about being bored. They need more activities or something. You don't understand how long I tried and tried to get a job this time I was out...It was fucking ridiculous, man.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

Some young people felt like their background, their family and where they grew up influenced their contact with the law. Young people described how if they had family members who had been in contact with the law, this affected how they saw police and the system as a whole.

*I don't know. I just think they think that if your parents or like your siblings or anything if they've done something wrong, then there's no point trying to give you chances because they just think that, because they do that you'd probably do the same thing. But I don't know. That's just what I think.*

(Lily, 15-year-old female)

*I don't know really, I don't know. Really, you're never ever going to stop anything if you come up from the area that's around here, you're fucked, pretty much.*

*Because every single person that comes from [suburb], every single person that goes to [suburb], they're all criminals, every single one. That's just how people are around them joints. Then you look at people around here, they've got jobs and stuff because they grew up out here. But out there, you're just bored all the fuckin' time, there's nothing to do.*

(Harry, 18-year-old male)

*So like, because I've lived in [suburb] for years, all the cops know me now and they just want me to fuck up. You know what I mean? You get scums like that and because of who me dad and shit is, I guess... I worry about - I'm always paranoid about the cops trying to get me for something I haven't done, which obviously has been happening a lot. But I don't know, I just hate the fucking - well, I just hate the police system if I'm honest because they try to bring me undone. Every single chance they get, they've been trying to bring me undone.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

*I would say if you come from an area like I did, they target you, they just follow you around, see what you're doing.*

(Alex, 17-year-old male)

Young people spoke about how young people could feel targeted by police, even when they wanted to change their behaviour.

*It's kind of hard, everyone's going to run in - have a run in with the law eventually. Not everyone's going to never have an interaction with the police officer or a cop. Everyone's going to have a run in with them some point in their life. After that, just try and get your head straight and shit. Just gets hard. One thing leads to another. You get put in detention, you get let out and you fuck up again...*

*They just don't look to see the good in us. They just do what they think's going to happen every time. They just do what they think's best for the public and everyone else. Don't think about what's best for us... Sometimes it's best for us to get locked up, but sometimes they do have no choice. But fuckin' every now and then, fuckin' a bit of trust and belief goes a long way.*

(Liam, 16-year-old male)



## Poverty, homelessness and survival

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Poverty, homelessness and engaging in criminal behaviour to survive were all discussed by young people as potential reasons for having contact with the law.

*Because that's what most kids go through before they get locked up. They're either homeless or going through poverty. That's why they need to do shit to survive.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

*Not really. That's mainly what got me into doing this. Had to do crime and shit to survive really. Had to steal from shops, do robberies to get money, get my food. Fuckin' when I was living in a tent I had to do that. Get money in case you needed something, fix it up. Just all really depends.*

(Liam, 16-year-old male)

*Yeah, well let's say Harley lived in a shelter or he was couch surfing. Harley doesn't have a job. He can't get a job because he's got no parents to sign the papers. He's underage. He's not old enough for Centrelink. What is he supposed to do? Harley needs money for things like hanging out with his friends, food, you know essential items like medication. It could be anything.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

For some young people, not having a home to go to was one of the main reasons young people committed crime.

*Yeah, I never really had a home so that's how I feel. When you don't got a home or nowhere to go and you're sitting on the doorstep crying to come home. It's pretty sad and it makes you depressed so you just go out and you've got to go steal food to eat and you've got to go steal - oh, make money just to go - like being with the older people to go to a hotel so that I can go to sleep there for the night or sometimes you sleep in the bushes and that. Like it's shit not having a home...*

*No, it's usually I just slept out in the cold and that's what we did when - me and my mates and that's why we got in trouble. We're out walking in the middle of the night but we probably go steal a car or something just to go sleep in and go drive because we've got to walk everywhere. We've got no home to go to or eat, you know? So it was bullshit. So yeah.*

(James, 15-year-old male)

Young people also said that being homeless can lead to criminal behaviour because of the lack of structure, support and the influence of your peer group.

*So not having a suitable home or bed could lead to you living on the streets or living in a shelter and not saying if he was to live on the streets...that you're hanging around bad people. But there's a high chance that if you hang around the shelter, you're going to be out running amok all day, or there's going to be other bad people in the shelter, which is going to lead to bad things.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)

*Getting kicked out of your mum's and father's, having nowhere else to go, but yeah, shit like that. Just you go out, I guess, I don't know as a young kid, you know what I mean? If I had nowhere to go, I had a fight with me mum and she kicked me out and that, but I've nowhere else to go. So I'd just go hook up with the older ones and go do a bit of crime, shit like that.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

One young person talked about the lack of homelessness services for young people:

*The government doesn't care about these kids that like are sleeping in alleyways or sleeping in parks like you know...where do they go at the end of the night? They sleep in a park. They sleep on the street. It just keeps happening...*

*Yeah, like even homeless shelters, they're all full up all the time...But when they're all full where are those other kids supposed to go? You know what I mean? There's not enough shelters either. But even the kids that are in the shelter, where are they supposed to go? Because they can't live there forever.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

## Child safety and welfare

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Young people spoke about how being involved with the Child Safety Service could be a catalyst for young people to commit crime, especially when their families lack support.

*But then you get my mum, like, all because me dad was a bad influence, and me brothers were taken, you know what I mean? And I got taken. We were good kids, we were all in school. I never got introduced to crime until I went to welfare, and that's honest. I just wanted to go back home. They'd never let me see me mum or nothing. So, I thought if you just want to keep me in the bush, then obviously I've got to get a way to get away to get out of it. That's how I started doing crime.*

*I dunno, in me own little respect, I thought it was kinda cool. So I kept doing it until they eventually, one day, they just let me go. Honestly, welfare just said, well, just let him go. Bang mate, I was out...Then yeah, it was hard for her because she was trying to get houses and shit, and the house population's bad at the moment, and she was trying to get a house and she was trying to do it all on her own. Plus, she had me, and I don't know, I guess she just didn't have enough - she doesn't even smoke dope, well, back then, and she still didn't have enough money to support her own son, you know what I mean? So, it was a bit hard.*

(Lucas, 18-year-old male)

Young people spoke about how systems could be improved to ensure that children don't fall through the cracks; from child safety, to housing and homelessness services, mental health and alcohol and other drugs services.

*Like child safety and that. Most kids that get locked up or in trouble they're usually kids that have fallen through the cracks before...*

*I don't know, like most kids that are in detention, they've done crime and shit for a reason. It's not just all for fun. It's like - that's what society doesn't understand. If you see something on the news, like that kid did an armed robbery you'll see all the Facebook comments and that on that post or they blame it on the parents or they blame it on the kid. They're like, oh they know better, how old they are, blah blah blah and all that. They don't know why they did it or why they had to do it or how they felt doing it...*

*Yeah, like child safety. Usually when there's a homeless kid, child safety doesn't do much. They either go into care or they go through shelters for years. Then they turn into a criminal or something...*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

Stevie went on to talk about how welfare systems need to change so that young people can access Centrelink benefits when they are not living at home, and have support to resume their education, or get a job.

*But how else is he supposed to get food and stuff? How is he supposed to get food if he's too young for Centrelink, he's too young for a job or it's hard for him to get a job because he doesn't have a proper address and he needs an address to get a job, but you need a job to get an address? Welfare doesn't care...How is he supposed to get a job? He hasn't been to school because no one has enrolled him in a school or you know like no job place wants to take him as he gets older.*

(Stevie, 15-year-old female)

Ryan spoke about how changes to welfare payments could assist young people to stay out of situations where they need to steal to get food or other essential items.

*Maybe the age that people can get their money under different circumstances, so someone's homeless and under the age of 15 or 16, they should be allowed to have some money to keep them going or something, or they should have care houses everywhere. I think they do, though.*

(Ryan, 17-year-old male)



# Conclusion

**Listen: This is my voice** is about making sure the voices of young people in the youth justice system are heard and considered by the Government, stakeholders, and the community. We have asked questions, we have listened, and now it is time to act.

Children and young people are rights holders and it is the responsibility of the adults around them to help them realise their rights by listening to them and taking them seriously. It is our obligation to ensure that all children and young people in Tasmania grow and thrive. This means that children and young people who have come into contact with the law have the same right to quality education, health, housing, disability and other universal supports as any other child or young person.

## Where to from here?

As Commissioner for Children and Young People, I will continue to highlight the voices of young people in the youth justice system and to advocate for their rights and wellbeing through the release of reports and audio-visual content.



## Contact

Commissioner for Children and Young People  
GPO Box 708, Hobart, Tas., 7001

Telephone: (03) 6166 1366  
[childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au](mailto:childcomm@childcomm.tas.gov.au)

