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Shocking backflip on raising age of criminal responsibility a profound betrayal by Victorian Labor government

The Victorian Labor Government has betrayed First Nations communities and turned its back on some of the state's most traumatised, vulnerable children by abandoning its promise to keep children under 14 out of prison.

Children who are criminalised and incarcerated in Victoria are disproportionately First Nations. This is due to the over-policing and racial profiling of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as described by multiple coronial inquests into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in police and prison custody in Victoria, and because children who engage in criminal behaviours overwhelmingly struggle with the impacts of intergenerational trauma.

“Amnesty International is shocked and completely horrified by this act of betrayal by the Victorian Labor government. The majority of Victorians do not support children under 14 being locked in prison, because the evidence shows that incarceration only exacerbates harm to children, their families and the wider community,” says **Kacey Teerman, Amnesty International Indigenous Rights Campaigner and Gomerioi woman.**

“Premier Jacinta Allan is actively ignoring the evidence that incarcerating children only compounds the impacts of abuse and trauma for these kids, and denies them the opportunity to turn their lives around through rehabilitative diversionary programs.”

“We call on the Labor government to honour its commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years old in line with the key recommendation from the landmark Youth Justice Review and Strategy.”

Amnesty International condemns the Victorian government for ignoring evidence-based policy and abandoning these children and their families in what can only be a deeply misguided attempt to avoid criticism from tabloid media and the Victorian opposition.

Amnesty International is urgently calling on the Premier Jacinta Allan to recommit to a raise in the age of criminal responsibility to 14, as was promised by the Labor government.