



24 August 2016

Media Release

## **Attorney-General, extend inquiry into youth detention to include disabilities**

Abuse of people with disabilities is a primary concern for us at Queensland Advocacy Incorporated. Our mission and funded purpose is to promote, protect and defend the most vulnerable people with disability. QAI commends the Queensland Attorney-General's decision to initiate an inquiry into youth detention in Queensland, but we urge Minister D'Ath to go further.

QAI recommends Minister, that the inquiry is comprehensive and includes the voices of those who are incarcerated, their families and advocates.

We strongly request that you pay particular attention to the cultural safety and protocols for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

QAI requests that you make particular reference to the experiences of people with disability many of whom were denied adequate supports by successive State governments, placing them by default on a path which has led to youth detention, Authorised Mental Health Facilities, forensic detention and other forms of civil incarceration. Research has shown that people with disabilities including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability are over-represented in all forms of detention and congregated settings.

With over 30 years' experience working closely with vulnerable people with disabilities it is evidently clear to QAI that institutions are debilitating, dehumanising and generate abuse.

And on behalf of our members, many of whom grew up in Queensland institutions, QAI supports the call by Queensland's Youth Affairs Network for a Royal Commission. Only a Royal Commission will have the ability to call and cross-examine witnesses, obtain evidence, and provide protection to witnesses and inquiry members from legal action such as defamation.

Finally, QAI appeals to you to show moral leadership and invite the opposition to approach this in a bipartisan manner. The problems with the youth justice system are not new. Without a thorough investigation they will continue to fester.

Michelle O'Flynn 0481381528