

18 May 2016

Hon Yvette D'Ath  
Attorney General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills  
Attorney General's Department  
GPO Box 149  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

By post and email: [attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au](mailto:attorney@ministerial.qld.gov.au)

Dear Attorney General 

***Youth Detention Centres- inability of legal practitioners to obtain appointments to see clients***

I write on behalf of the Queensland Law Society to draw your attention to this important issue and request that you forward this letter to all Brisbane based youth detention centres as a matter of urgency.

This response has been compiled with the assistance of the Childrens Law Committee, who have substantial expertise and practice in this area.

A number of our member practitioners have expressed concerns on the availability of appointments (in person and via video conferencing) to see clients in youth detention centres. Our members have also voiced their concerns over the inability of legal practitioners to telephone through to the youth detention centres to speak with their clients. Our members advise that when practitioners call through to the detention centres, they are only able to speak with their clients over the telephone through an intermediary case worker, this practice often delays or restricts contact between legal practitioners and their clients.

In the view of the Society, adequate access to legal representation while detained is an imperative right of all detainees and in particular for children and young adults in the youth detention system.

The Society maintains that a child being dealt with under the *Youth Justice Act 1992* should have access to legal and other support services, including services concerned with advocacy and interpretation.

The Society contends that these inadequacies may be remedied through the following initiatives:

- Greater staffing at detention centres to ensure increased availability of scheduled legal visits with detainees and an enhanced ability for lawyers to call through to detention centres and speak with their clients; and

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- Reserving the "visits area" in youth detention centres for the use of visiting legal practitioners, rather than for internal personnel, case workers and medical staff interactions.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this issue.

Please do not hesitate to contact either myself or have a member of your staff contact our Policy Solicitor, Annmaree Verderosa on (07) 3842 5872 or [a.verderosa@qls.com.au](mailto:a.verderosa@qls.com.au) if you wish to discuss these concepts further.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Potts', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Bill Potts**  
**President**