

Dear Committee Members

I am writing to lend my support to an educational approach to young offenders rather than a criminal offender approach. *KIDS BELONG IN CLASSROOMS, NOT COURTROOMS.*

Through a Vocational Training and Employment Centre (VTEC) a holistic approach can be used to ensure our young people don't enter the criminal justice system. The [VTEC model](#) works for Indigenous people who have been long term unemployed – we can replicate this for Indigenous youth who are at risk of falling through the cracks.

The facts are:

On an average day in 2011-12 Indigenous youth were 31 times as likely to be in juvenile detention as non-Indigenous youth.

Aboriginal people are returned to prison at a higher rate than they are retained in either high school or university.

35.9 per cent of the Indigenous population is under the age of 15 – the time for action is now.

90 per cent of young Indigenous people that appear before the Children's Court go on to appear before the adult criminal court. Young Indigenous offenders are repeat offenders; small crimes turn into big crimes and the whole community loses. We can change that.

I urge you to consider this model as you undertake your important work.

Regards

Pamela Romanis

(Information in italics care of Generation One)