

Youth Justice

After years marred by crisis, there is promising movement in the right direction in spending on youth justice.

We're beginning to see investment across the spectrum of intervention that extends beyond child prisons, to increased prioritisation of diversion, rehabilitation-focused justice and therapeutic care. This is the direction that all world-class youth justice systems are moving in, and we welcome these steps from the WA Government. Our factsheet is organised by these dimensions, in line with Social Reinvestment WA's [Blueprint for A Better Future](#).

While investment in the continuation of the therapeutic model of care for youth detention is welcome and sorely needed, we lack a comprehensive range of sentencing alternatives, community-based alternatives to detention and a focus on individualised throughcare and reintegration for children outside prison walls. These are areas where the \$158 million earmarked for a new youth detention centre could perhaps be better spent.

It has never been clearer that WA needs an integrated vision and a State-wide, whole-of-government youth justice strategy to guide investment long term. One that keeps our communities safe, ends incarceration of children and builds better pathways for our most disadvantaged young people.

Initiative	Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy <i>(BP1, P18) (BP2, V1, P362) (BP2, V2, P402) (BP3, P146)</i>
Investment	\$41 million over four years.
Description	A WA Government program to support community-led, place-based initiatives across the Kimberley that improve Aboriginal youth wellbeing and community safety and address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in the justice system. Includes funding for Young and Deadly Futures Alternative Learning Program.
Implications	<i>Continued investments in the Kimberly Juvenile Justice Strategy demonstrate recognition of the importance of place-based, culturally informed, preventative approaches to addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal young people in the justice system.</i>

Initiative	At Risk Youth Funding Uplift (BP3, P228, P229)
Investment	\$20.3 million over four years.
Description	To provide a baseline funding uplift for contracts in the At Risk Youth portfolio, including 38 providers in regional WA, to support service sustainability and continuity.
Implications	<i>This is a new uplift for At Risk Youth services. A 15 per cent uplift will be applied to all new service providers from 1 July 2026, meaning the uplift will also form part of the recommissioning from 2027-28. This approach acknowledges the sustainability pressures facing services operating under extended contracts.</i>

Initiative	Home Safe Program (BP2, V2, P480)
Investment	\$7.6 million over four years.
Description	Home Safe is designed to help unaccompanied young people under the age of 16 in Northbridge after 10 pm to return home or to a safe place and divert them from contact with the justice system while also providing them with access to support.
Implications	<i>Ongoing funding for this diversion initiative is welcome.</i>

Initiative	Target 120 Programs (BP1, P18) (BP2, V2, P479, P480, P482)
Investment	\$65.3 million over four years.
Description	Target 120 is an early intervention program for young people at risk of repeat offending and engagement with the justice system. This funding extends delivery of Target 120 (including post-program transition) for another four years.
Implications	<i>Ongoing funding for Target 120 is welcome, given it was missing from last year's forwards estimates. This initiative plays an important role in the WA justice system, with its focus on early intervention and diversion. We look forward to the public release of a recently completed evaluation of this initiative to learn more about its impact.</i>

Initiative	City of Kwinana Arclight Initiative (BP2, V2, P480)
Investment	\$500,000 over the next two years

Description	Arclight is a diversion and reintegration initiative taking a holistic approach to address the root causes of disengagement and offending for young people in Kwinana, through collaborative responses.
Implications	<i>We're pleased to see WA Government invest in this successful and evidence-based initiative, working to keep kids out of the justice system.</i>

Initiative	Early Resolution in the Children Court (BP2, V2, P442)
Investment	\$6.2 million over four years.
Description	This Children's Court initiative aims to provide meaningful and timely outcomes across the juvenile justice system through effective stakeholder collaboration with key participants in the criminal justice sector.
Implications	<i>Reducing the time children spend waiting for their day in court and in the justice system is better for everyone, provided it doesn't impede on due process, procedural fairness and access to adequate support. Faster resolutions are more developmentally appropriate for children and have the potential to reduce time children spent in custody by reducing remand times.</i>

Initiative	Youth Bail Services for Armadale (BP2, V2, P402)
Investment	\$4.9 million over two years
Description	Expanded support for young people in the criminal justice system aimed at reducing re-offending. Investment will provide holistic, wraparound support for young people through assistance with transport, accommodation, education and training, referrals to health, welfare and justice-related programs.
Implications	<i>Holistic, therapeutic support for young people on bail is an important aspect of rehabilitation-focused justice.</i>

Initiative	DARDY Disability Advocacy and Referral Diversion for Young People (BP2, V2, P402)
Investment	\$2 million over four years.
Description	DARDY works in partnership with State-wide agencies and young people under 25 who may be experiencing difficulties due to disability to develop positive pathways to necessary supports. DARDY aims to improve outcomes and to create better, stronger futures.

Implications	<i>Young people with disability are significantly overrepresented in our justice system. We welcome ongoing funding for the DARDY Project, which supports young people to navigate the legal system and access therapeutic, community-based supports.</i>
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Initiative	Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Therapeutic Court <i>(BP2, V2, P403, P480)</i>
Investment	\$3.90 million over four years.
Description	Danjoo Bidi-Ak is a specialist court in the Children's Court of WA, providing therapeutic, culturally informed pathways for Aboriginal children and their families.
Implications	<i>We welcome ongoing funding for Danjoo Bidi-Ak, and culturally informed courts which increase engagement and understanding of court processes and support therapeutic responses.</i>

Initiative	In-Roads Therapeutic Court Program <i>(BP2, V1, P344) (BP2, V2, P480)</i>
Investment	\$3.5 million over two years.
Description	In-Roads is a therapeutic court of the Children's Court of WA providing an alternative to detention for young people who have pled guilty to criminal charges, aiming to address underlying causes of offending and prevent reoffending.
Implications	<i>Ongoing funding for In-Roads is welcome, as it is an excellent example of a needs-based justice response. It has a particular focus on children aged 10 to 14 years, aiming to keep them out of detention.</i>

Initiative	New Youth Detention Centre <i>(BP2, V2, P412)</i>
Investment	\$158.5 million.
Description	This investment of \$158.5 million, including \$72.9 million in 2026-27, is for a new high-security, purpose-built youth detention centre to provide therapeutic care and intervention for young people with highly complex needs.
Implications	<i>This is concerning given the significant cost. Given that Banksia Hill is under capacity and Unit 18 is currently unoccupied, there appears to be no need for the new facility. With completion not expected until at least 2028, the project also risks delaying the immediate closure of Unit 18, which the WA Government has indicated will remain operational until the new facility is built.</i>

Initiative	Therapeutic Model of Care for Youth Detention <i>(BP2, V2, P402)</i>
Investment	\$20.9 million over four years
Description	In 2023, the Model of Care was introduced in youth detention to ensure a therapeutic, trauma-informed, culturally-safe, coordinated and holistic approach to supporting young people - from their first time in detention through to their successful reintegration into the community upon release.
Implications	<i>Ongoing and increasing investment in the Model of Care in Youth Detention is critical to improving conditions and meeting the needs of incredibly at-risk children and young people. Investments and focus in this area to date have been instrumental to ending the crisis within youth detention.</i>