

**Submission
No 15**

INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN AFFECTED BY PARENTAL INCARCERATION

Organisation: Comissioner for Children and Young People, South Australia

Date Received: 27 April 2022

The Secretary
Legislative Council, Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

Email: cipinquiry@parliament.vic.gov.au

27th April 2022

Re: Inquiry into children affected by parental incarceration

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry into children affected by parental incarceration.

As the South Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, my role is to promote and advocate for the rights, interests and wellbeing of all children and young people in South Australia.

I am writing to provide the Committee with my recent report ***Join the Dots: Considering the impact of parental incarceration on children and young people.***

This report is based on my consultation with children and young people affected by parental incarceration and with incarcerated parents. It brings children and young people's voices to the fore on a range of issues relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

Children and young people described the impact of having a parent in prison on their relationships, health, wellbeing, and education. They also shared their experiences interacting with adult-focused systems and services.

While their experiences are unique and diverse, children often shared experiences of social isolation, stigma, and bullying, as well as feelings of anger, shame, and guilt 'by association'. In addition to financial stress and changes to their living or care arrangements, they also highlighted the impacts of parental incarceration on their rights to be heard, told the truth, and to have their relationship with their parent recognised.

Children, young people, and incarcerated parents also identified changes at a systemic level that would make a significant and positive difference to their lives.

Drawing on evidence of child-friendly practice at different stages of the adult justice system in Australia and overseas, the report makes four key recommendations to join the dots between systems and services in ways that consider the rights and needs of this vulnerable and hidden group of children.

If you would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Connolly

Commissioner for Children and Young People
Adelaide, South Australia