



## TASMANIA LET'S RAISE THE AGE AND DO MORE

Big hART applauds the Tasmania Government's decision to raise the age of young people incarcerated from age 10 to 14 years of age, and the importance they've placed on prevention and early intervention.

"We commend Minister Jaensch and the Tasmanian Government for stepping up as the first jurisdiction in Australia to raise the age of children in detention to 14 years of age", says Big hART CEO Scott Rankin.

"It is fantastic to see Tasmania leading the nation on this important issue. Minister Jaensch has been a great supporter of Big hART's work and has seen the strong outcomes young people have achieved through our programs on the North West Coast. To build on this recent decision, Big hART is also keen to support the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to match this nation leading commitment, as well as a renewed focus on therapeutic, primary prevention and diversionary responses to keep young people out of the system."

"Most importantly, Big hART is committed to helping to change Australia's dire rates of Indigenous youth incarceration. On any given night, 50% of the children locked up in Australia's jails are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, coming from just 3% of our population. We can no longer ignore the urgency to change this situation which is destroying lives in families and communities around the country. We look forward to continuing to work with the Tasmanian Government in their commitment to this important change."

Big hART has a strong track record of working in juvenile justice, including with at-risk young people in the community, and young offenders in diversionary programs. 2022 marks Big hART's 30th anniversary, with the first project in 1992 focused on juvenile justice and primary prevention. The program saw offences from young people reduce from one offence per week from the participants, to one offence in ten months. In regional NSW Big hART worked on a violence prevention project in rural NSW at the Eastern Riverina Justice Centre, and in 2000 worked with young offenders at the now notorious Don Dale Juvenile Justice Centre in the Northern Territory. Big hART has won 8 Institute of Criminology Violence Prevention Awards, the 2016 Tasmanian Human Rights Award, a World Health Organisation Award for Safe Communities and the Telstra Charity of the Year in 2018 for this kind of work. After 30 years it is deeply rewarding to witness the changes the Tasmanian Government is making.

Big hART's Tasmanian approach is now exported nationally. For over 12 years, Big hART has worked in Ieramugadu (Roebourne) in Western Australia, with the family and community of Yindjibarndi teenager John Pat, whose death in custody at aged 16 was one of the key instigators of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Big hART has now worked with over 70% of Roebourne's young people, many who live vulnerable lives. Music has proved a great healer in the community as well as in Roebourne Regional Prison, creating many songs, recordings and a concert called Songs for Freedom. In our 30th year Big hART will take Songs for Freedom on tour across the country underpinned by a social impact strategy which aims to rapidly reduce the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Big hART would also like to acknowledge the many years of sorrow, anger, advocacy and lobbying by Indigenous leaders, volunteer groups and charities around the country to achieve this first important step.

Founded in 1992, Big hART is a not-for-profit campaigning arts organisation which has worked in 55 communities in remote, rural, regional and urban Australia and won 45 awards.



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