

A young person's guide to the Youth Justice Blueprint

Keeping children and young people safe, strong and connected

What is the Blueprint?

The Blueprint is a new plan to find better ways to keep children and young people from breaking the law, and being involved with the police and the Court. It is a plan about keeping children and young people **safe, strong and connected**.

When we can do this, Canberra will be a safer place to live for everyone.

To find out what we needed to include in the Blueprint, we listened to people who work with young people and families, and to young people about what a good plan would contain. Everyone had lots of good ideas about how we could make our youth justice system better.

Why we need the Blueprint

We know that more young people are breaking the law and becoming involved with Police and the Courts or ending up in detention (in Canberra this is the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre). We wanted to find out why, and to work out what we can all do to stop this happening. The Blueprint is the plan to help us to do this.

Talking to young people, and people who work with them was a really big part of writing the Blueprint. By listening, talking and reading about different experiences, we found out that we needed to better support young people to keep them out of the youth justice system. This is especially important for young people who are making a fresh start in their lives.

People also told us that the Blueprint had to find ways for young people to be part of our community—to keep learning, to work, have a safe place to live and to keep making positive life choices. The Blueprint calls this **'diversion'** and **'prevention'**.

One of the most important things that the Blueprint will do, is to make sure young people get the right kind of help, when they need it so they can make good choices when things get tough.

We know that children and young people become involved with Police and the Court for lots of reasons.

Sometimes young people do things that are wrong because of problems at home like violence, or they are using drugs or alcohol.

And sometimes when young people are trying to build a sense of belonging, they connect with people who are involved in unlawful activities, and they can get drawn into breaking the law too.

The Blueprint is about how lots of different people in the community who understand young people, can work together. They can help children, young people, and their families to solve problems before they become too big. **This part of the Blueprint is called 'early intervention'**.

The Blueprint is also about finding ways to assist children and young people to:

- stay connected to their family and their home so they have a sense of belonging and feel part of something that is important to them
- understand and learn to manage strong emotions like anger or sadness so that they can make positive life choices
- stop using drugs and alcohol as a way to deal with problems
- feel good about themselves and know how to build strong positive relationships around them to support them when things get tough
- find ways to be part of the community.

The Blueprint will mean a lot of work by a lot of people. People who work with young people in services that assist with health, education, training, youth justice and housing will all work together. It's going to take a while to make everything in the Blueprint happen.

That's why we have ten years to do it which seems like a long time. But we will start with a list of things to do in the first three years. And then we will check with everyone who is involved — including children and young people to see that what we are doing is really working.

When we do this checking, it will be really important to listen to what children and young people tell us about what has changed in a good way, and what hasn't.

We might have to change the Blueprint a little so that we keep working towards our most important goal which is to *keep children and young people to stay safe, strong and connected.*