

Hon Jacinta Allan MP – Premier of Victoria

Wednesday, 12 November 2025

ADULT TIME FOR VIOLENT CRIME

All children 14 and above committing violent crimes – like invading someone’s home or injuring someone with a machete in a sickening act of violence – will face adult sentences in adult courts, under *Adult Time for Violent Crime*.

That means courts will treat these children like adults, so jail is more likely, and sentences are longer.

Premier Jacinta Allan joined Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny today to announce that the Allan Labor Government will implement it in Victoria, with a Bill to be introduced to Parliament this year.

Adult Time for Violent Crime will deliver serious consequences for children committing brazen, violent crimes that hurt victims and the community. It will change the status quo of youth sentencing in Victoria in two main ways:

1) It significantly increases the likelihood of a jail sentence

Currently, in the Children’s Court, 34 per cent of children and young people sentenced for aggravated home invasion or aggravated carjacking offences go to jail.

But when they are sentenced for the same crimes in an adult court, 97 per cent go to jail.

Right now, few children face an adult court with a jury – only a judge makes the call. Under *Adult Time for Violent Crime*, children 14 and above must face adult sentencing in an adult court (the County Court) for the violent crime.

Adult courts put more emphasis on community safety and victims, and sentencing outcomes show it: whenever child offenders are sentenced for a violent crime in an adult court, most go to jail.

2) It significantly increases the maximum length of jail sentences

The maximum length of a jail sentence that can be imposed in the Children’s Court is 3 years – for any offence.

But the County Court can currently impose a jail sentence of up to 25 years for aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking, and up to 20 years for intentionally causing serious injury through gross violence.

As part of this plan, the Government will further increase the maximum jail sentence for aggravated home invasion and aggravated carjacking. For anyone 14 and over, these offences will carry a life sentence through *Adult Time for Violent Crime*.

The following crimes will be subject to *Adult Time for Violent Crime*:

- Aggravated home invasion
- Home invasion
- Intentionally causing injury in circumstances of gross violence (includes machete crime)
- Recklessly causing injury in circumstances of gross violence (includes machete crime)
- Aggravated carjacking
- Carjacking
- Aggravated burglary (serious and repeated)
- Armed robbery (serious and repeated)

The first five crimes will be removed from the jurisdiction of the Children's Court, and the matter will face full trial and sentencing in the County Court. Carjacking will also be heard in the County Court by default unless there are substantial and compelling reasons for a matter to stay in the Children's Court and be excluded from the regime.

Legislative guidance will confirm that aggravated burglary and armed robbery offences should be heard in the County Court if they are serious and repeated.

Government will provide more resources to the County Court, including new judges, to fast-track hearings for these offenders. Children specifically aged 14 may be tried and sentenced in the Children's Court, and excluded from *Adult Time for Violent Crime*, in substantial and compelling circumstances (e.g. if they have a cognitive disability).

Stronger consequences for other crimes heard in the Children's Court

Right now, the principles that guide judges' sentencing decisions in the Children's Court aren't right, often resulting in sentences that don't meet community expectations and fail to recognise what victims went through.

We will change decision-making principles in the Children's Court, so they reflect those used for adults. That means:

- requiring judges to clearly prioritise community safety in sentencing decisions – because it matters most
- requiring judges to consider the impact of a child's offending on the victim – and provide opportunities for the child to try and restore the harm they caused
- removing the rule that jail for children is the 'last resort' – because for some crimes, it shouldn't be

Why this is needed

There are no easy solutions to youth crime, and the best approach is always to stop crime before it starts. But when children commit these brazen, violent crimes, they should face serious consequences in the justice system.

As parents, we know children always need firm boundaries – not just at home but under the law. The threat of going to jail for breaking the law helps keep children within the guardrails and teaches them right from wrong. In turn, that keeps the community safe.

But right now, the status quo of youth sentencing isn't working to deliver these consequences. Police, victims and the community tell us children don't fear the consequences, so they don't respect the boundaries.

Changing that status quo to protect the community starts with *Adult Time for Violent Crime*. It will reinforce the boundaries for children in the justice system, with serious consequences for violent crime.

How we'll do it

This is a complex reform requiring significant amendments to both the Crimes Act, the Children, Youth and Families Act and the Youth Justice Act. We will deliver it quickly. A Bill to establish the regime will be introduced to Parliament this year so *Adult Time For Violent Crime* is in place in 2026.

This is the first major reform announced in Victoria's *Serious Consequences – Early Interventions* plan to reduce violent youth crime by reinforcing the boundaries for children, both in the community and in the justice system.

In addition, tough bail laws have just come into effect, making it much harder to get bail if you're charged with the worst crimes. The new Chief Commissioner is overhauling Victoria Police with more police on the street. And we've banned machetes – under our laws, you can go to jail simply for owning one.

Quotes Attributable to Premier Jacinta Allan

"There are too many victims, not enough consequences. That's why we're introducing Adult Time for Violent Crime."

"We want courts to treat these violent children like adults, so jail is more likely and sentences are longer."

"This will mean more violent youth offenders going to jail, facing serious consequences."

Quotes Attributable to Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenny

“When child offenders are sentenced in an adult court, most go to jail. Adult courts put more emphasis on victims, violence and community safety.”

“There are no easy solutions to youth crime, and the best approach is always to stop crime before it starts. But we absolutely need serious consequences for violent youth crime to protect the community now.”