

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL 2023

Submission No: 80
Submitted by: Caryn Powell
Publication:
Attachments:
Submitter Comments:

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Economics and Governance Committee](#)
Subject: Suspensions and exclusions
Date: Monday, 27 February 2023 10:14:03 PM
Attachments: [Letter about suspensions and expellisions.docx](#)

Good afternoon

After sending this letter to Trevor Watts he has urged me to forward a copy to you despite the closing of the timeline to respond. Unfortunately I have been away and unable to respond sooner. I hope you will consider allowing this response to be included.

From Trevor Watts

Thank you very much for reaching out and offering such a comprehensive view of your experiences.

I am a firm believer that education is vital when it comes to curbing the Youth Crime crisis, but unfortunately I also understand students learn in very different ways. Especially if they are a little behind in their literacy and numeracy.

Submissions have closed on this legislation, but as they were only open for 3 days I would strongly suggest emailing through to the Committee Secretary to ask if your submission can be included.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows 10

Many Thanks

Caryn Powell

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Good morning to you all.

I read the article in **The Chronicle** today 23 Feb 2023, about the suspension and expulsion of students in schools.

My background

As a qualified teacher, I ran the **Students at Risk program** (Federally funded program 1992 -1996 when funding stopped) with **the support team, a behaviour management teacher and Guidance Officer**, at Dalby State High. This worked and allowed the best outcomes for all concerned. In 1996 I became the support teacher for students with learning difficulties at Dalby State High until 2000.

For family reasons, I transferred to Toowoomba and had a variety of roles in a variety of schools, including support teacher, special education teacher, advisory visiting teacher, and finally Deputy Principal at Gabbinbar State School from 2004 -2014 when I retired. I suspended students as part of my duties as Deputy Principal as required. I continued to work and volunteer with The Smith Family until 2021.

Points.

There are students coming to school **on a daily basis** who are in no fit state to engage in regular classroom lessons due to their mental health or situation at home – be it financial stress, domestic violence, drug, sexual or alcohol abuse, illness of a family member resulting in neglect by parents and carers (unintentional at times). Sometimes these students have had little or no sleep. They feel invisible, angry, frustrated, powerless and sometimes envious of other's family situations.

- *These students often act out and disrupt classes, or bully others in an effort to feel some power in their lives and feel a sense of belonging and worth. This results in them being suspended or expelled.*
- *School is the safe place for some of these students and they need to be there, but not in the regular classroom where they disrupt the teaching and learning of the other 24 students in the class ready to learn. The Support team at Dalby State High identified these students, and they did a daily check in before being allowed to go to class.*
- *If we found them to be incapable of engaging effectively, we did not allow them to go to class straight away.*

We might

1. give them breakfast,
 2. offer a safe place to rest.
 3. take them to a basketball court and deescalate them with physical activity or
 4. sometimes listen to and talk with them if plausible at that time.
 5. modify lessons and assignments with them to ensure they did not fall further behind in the classroom especially if their literacy and numeracy skills were below that of their peers. We would break down lessons into smaller achievable tasks.
 6. Deliver anger management classes to identify their triggers and develop acceptable ways to cope with their anger.
- *These students often associate school with failure and skip school to “hang out with “friends” which only isolates them further (no education and no future prospects) which escalates their involvement in criminal behaviour. It is a vicious circle and needs to be broken*
 - *These students are vulnerable and are targeted by others (peers, gangs, adults) to perpetrate crimes to feel important and to give them a sense of belonging and fun. They need to get away from those influencing their decisions and placed in positive environments where they can be rehabilitated and helped.*
 - *Every person needs to be assessed individually and not clumped into groups of “juvenile delinquents” This sometimes becomes a self-fulfilling prophesy telling them they are bad and helps their downwards spiral if placed with others refusing help. Some repeat offenders get great sense of power by being able to control others less able to resist their pressure to conform with their wishes. . I also learned that we can only offer assistance, but if a student is not willing to be responsible for their own learning and wants to change, our chance of success is severely hindered.*
 - *Teachers can only do so much. They need to be able to focus on what they are trained to do - teaching those students capable of learning and not having their classrooms turned into battlefields by a few disruptive students. Give teachers behaviour management strategies by all means, but don't expect them to cope with all the demands of teaching as well as counselling these students. That needs a team of committed people of which a social worker is one, and I commend their introduction into schools.*
 - *Also need to address the workload of guidance officer reduce the number of students they are expected to be able to help. It was 1500 students in a variety of schools. This includes counselling and assessment of students with special needs to obtain funding in schools. Wait time to see a guidance officer is ridiculous. A parent stated to me that when she asked for an appointment she was advised that wait times were very long and she should seek an appointment with a psychologist privately. You can go through your local doctor for a referral for 6 free visits.. Even then wait times were significant.*