

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY SAFETY BILL 2023

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Attachments:

Submitter Comments:

Economic & Governance Committee – Public Hearing Strengthening Community Safety

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Personal submission from [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

Dear Committee Secretariat, Chair and members.

I am not politically minded but watched with interest the public comments recorded on line at the Townsville meeting of the Economic & Governance Committee – Public Hearing Strengthening Community Safety on Thurs 2/3/23. I thank the Chair for including the email address at the conclusion of the meeting to encourage further public comment on such an important issue.

I commend the committee for their patience whilst listening to the public submissions largely which are driven by passion and frustration, and are often off the cuff and poorly planned (see note 1). I have an elderly mother who lives alone [REDACTED] and am very concerned for her safety with the increase in crime in the area, particularly with home invasions. Toowoomba was thrown into the national spotlight recently due to an elderly gentleman being attacked with a hammer. It was a vicious and cowardly attack on an innocent member of the community and is a genuine reflection of how community safety is not a priority. It is my understanding that the youth offender was a serious repeat offender whose crimes appear to be escalating in severity and blatantly showed no remorse by posting comments online.

I was drawn to the comments by Miss Orton, spokesperson for the Toowoomba Victims of Crime Advocacy Group and agree with a few of the key points including:

- Minimum sentencing and increasing in severity for repeat offenders;
- Investing in mental health assessments and support particularly for youth offenders;
- Mentoring or role modelling;
- Algorithms for social media to prevent crimes from being posted online;
- Victims of crime should have a wider scope to enable assistance for all victims of crime; and
- The justice system is failing to meet community expectations, not providing community safety and failing to rehabilitate.

I would like to make comment on a few of these issues too.

Firstly, I think that the community and justice system really need to invest in correcting the behaviour of youth through appropriate punishments/remediation, mental health assessments/support, through community inclusion (sport, education, work) and mentoring/help services.

I believe that the justice system is failing the victims of crime and the offenders (particularly youth offenders). All crimes need some form of punishment to let the offender know that their actions are not socially acceptable and that they have consequence. Sentencing courts need to be given support and power to implement suitable punishments which appropriately reflect the crime and history. Youth should be afforded mental health assessments, offered support, and be given opportunities to encourage involvement in the community and shown how they can positively contribute and add value to society.

Getting the right balance of punishment relative to the crime can have a huge follow-on effect. It can act as a deterrent to prevent future crimes (either directly or by association). If it is a deterrent it could potentially change their future socially and save community resources (assets, personnel and financial). The time and money spent to be inclusive, provide rehabilitation, assisting with mental health needs/services, and ultimately less long term incarceration should be looked at as an investment not as an expense.

I believe that youth who do not get positive role models in the right places, will seek them in the wrong places (see note 2). A social program should be implemented to include mentoring of successful member in

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the community including sportspeople, artists, entrepreneurs, social media influencers, business owners, recovered addicts, etc. The mentoring should be at justice facilities, community support groups and schools. It should include advice, support and encouragement and help youth develop skills & interests, demonstrate appropriate life choices, and show how to pursue (legal) careers/paths/training. I think it very important to include stories from people who have experience with making poor choices when they were young and how they have turned their life around making better life choices. It could also include hearing from victims of crime and how their lives have been affected, and encourage youth to find a sport or a hobby that allows them to participate in society. Intensive case management is really urgently needed for high-risk youth. These kids need the investment of holistic support.

The spokesperson for the Toowoomba Victims of Crime Advocacy Group suggested that handouts be available to victims of crime to provide information about their case. I would like to suggest that an information handout should also be available to youth offenders to outline their crimes and consequences. It must be in a language they can understand (age, education-level, and language appropriate). It could include information on local support groups and where they can talk to someone and get support.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute, voice my concerns and offer suggestions.

I hope the new bill provides reform and creates safety in the community.

Notes:

- 1. I strongly disagreed with the spokesperson Mr Clark who disciplined/flogged their child with a garden hose, nor the idea that the government should remove electronic devices (this should be a parental form of discipline), and not the idea that all children come from homes where they are not loved/wanted (he himself said his son was going off the rails). Drug testing could form part of the parole period and a positive test could see the offender returned to remand.*
- 2. I have heard this idea also being applied to young females where if they don't get love in the right places, they will often seek it in the wrong places.*