



Crime Inquiry 2014  
Submission 006



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Legal Affairs and Community Safety Committee  
Parliament House  
George Street  
Brisbane Q'ld., 4000

To the Committee,

Thank you for your invitation to Youth and Families Association to offer a submission to the current inquiry on ***Strategies to Prevent and Reduce Criminal Activity in Queensland***.

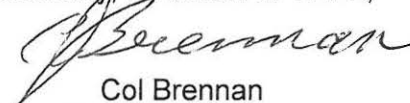
On behalf of our Management Committee, and with their approval, I am offering a contribution to this inquiry. The tenor of the meeting at which this decision was made was that, while we would like to take the time to fully address all aspects of the inquiry, we believe there are very relevant principles, which we fear are frequently overlooked in seeking solutions to criminal activity.

I am a member of a small team of volunteers responsible for honorary management of this Incorporated Association. As such I have a considerable load of governance responsibilities, which seems to grow exponentially by the year. I am approaching 66 years of age, still actively involved in part-time employment, spending my paid hours, and a significant proportion of my volunteer hours, working amongst children and young people.

It is in particular from my personal experience and observations, reinforced by consultations with others in our Association, of changes in society and in particular in "social morality", that we respond. This is also strengthened by a strong Judeo-Christian ethical position, again shared with my fellow volunteers.

Please accept this covering letter, and the Submission, as our contribution in good faith, to your inquiry.

Sincerely, on behalf of YAFA,

  
Col Brennan  
(President, YAFA)

## SUBMISSION

From the standpoint indicated in our covering letter, we are inclined to:

- keep our contribution as simple and *to-the-point* as possible, for the sake of conserving valuable volunteer time,
- approach the matter from a “diagnosis and prevention” perspective, rather than contributing to the endless and fruitless cycle of “treating symptoms”, and
- avoid at all costs, solutions which amount to “more of the same”.

### Relevant Principles

- **We believe, by conviction, and from experience and observation, criminal activity arises out of attitudes – from the convictions of the heart, inside a person – not as a result of inadequate legislation or regulation imposed from outside.**
- **We strongly assert that rampant crime is the unavoidable ultimate outcome of the degeneration of social morality.**

On the basis of these **Relevant Principles**, we will comment on the three principal **Terms of Reference** under which your committee is required to report, namely:

- *strategies to prevent and reduce criminal activity in Queensland,*
- *measures to curb criminal activity and reduce the rates of recidivism; and*
- *building a safer community.*

Because of the strong similarities of the implications of, and therefore responses to, the first two dot-points, I will address them as one.

**It is unimaginable and impossible that legal or regulatory solutions to eliminate outcomes should solve a problem created by the demolition of public moral principle. These attempts, short term, only move us towards a "Police State", where those who have held onto their morals are increasingly encumbered, and entangled in red-tape spaghetti, while the habitually unethical are just presented with minor new challenges, to circumvent the regulation. The ultimate outcome, tyranny – rampant criminal activity – will be the same eventually, whether or not it passes first through a "dictatorship" phase.**

**Rationale;**

Over the past five or six decades, Australia has been experiencing a dramatic change in social moral persuasion, perhaps starting a little later in Queensland, but we have certainly caught up rapidly more recently. At the every-day life level, the high moral expectations which were commonplace in the community when my generation was comprised of small children, have been superseded with "anything goes". Along with this, and as a direct result of it, sense of personal responsibility has declined sharply. Since what we do is no longer intrinsically "right or wrong", consequences must be the fault of someone or something else. There are many clearly observable measures of this trend in homes and communities, educational institutions and workplaces, on the streets, in families, in family, social and business communications, in business generally, and even in governments and courts.

The public perception of what is acceptable behaviour has slipped alarmingly. The country I loved, Australia, is no longer the country I lived in as a young child. Over the ensuing years, there have been attempts to reinstate a crime-safe environment by regulation, but that is like the proverbial "dog chasing its tail". Even if we could catch up with the first round of issues, we could never keep abreast of the new issues introduced as technologies and pursuits move on. Responding to every possible eventuality **cannot work**, and prescriptiveness only makes ways of avoiding the law easier to see.

Dot-point 3.

It is our strong conviction that:

**Significant reduction in criminal activity in society, and restoration of the level of public safety we enjoyed even 50 years ago, will never be realities unless and until public morality is restored. The primary responsibility of government and courts in regard to criminal activity is to administer justice – to punish wrongdoing, and commend right.**

**There will no doubt at times be cases of genuine extenuating circumstances which do deserve that courts show leniency, however it is the exclusive domain of the offended to give forgiveness or grace. This is not the domain of government or courts. Consequences must fit crime.**

**Rationale;**

We accept that there was an earlier era, in *Colonial Australia*, when criminal activity, as well as rogue and despotic governance practices, were at high levels. But we, nationally, have since also enjoyed a much safer living environment than in either those days, or at present. We believe this to be due to a concern, expressed in the ensuing years in both society generally and at the governance level, to uphold Righteousness at the heart of both private and public life, and a sense of responsibility to sustain sound foundations and fair and just treatment of each other.

There are two pertinent quotes from the wisdom writings of the Hebrew Scriptures:

Psalms 11:31, "**When the foundations are [being] destroyed, what can the righteous do?**", and Proverbs 14:34, "**Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.**"

We appear to be moving ever closer to a situation where wrongdoing is excused, or at least treated lightly, while victims are left to their own devices. We seem, as a society, to be calling evil good, and good evil. Unless we reverse the trend, we will never again enjoy a safe community.

