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SUBMISSION TO THE HATE CRIME INQUIRY FROM COURAGE TO CARE

As a member of the Cohesive Community Coalition, I write this submission on behalf of Courage to Care Queensland, which is a subsidiary of B'nai B'rith Courage to Care NSW, a not-for-profit Jewish service organisation. Since 2015, this community outreach initiative has reached over 11,000 Queensland students between years 6-12.

The Courage to Care in the Classroom Education Program teaches students the importance of standing up against discrimination, racism and prejudice and empowers individuals to take positive action in their everyday lives. Through listening to the testimonies of Holocaust Survivors and stories of their rescuers and then discussing the relevance of these stories to their own lives, students are made aware of the power of the individual to make a difference and of the choices that determine whether we remain Bystanders or become Upstanders.

Courage to Care is not a grassroots organisation and has no ongoing contact with the students nor any racially or religiously victimised or targeted group.

Our program aims to be a pro-active, to alert school students to the dangers of all forms of racial, ethnic and religious vilification and urges them to be Upstanders while keeping in mind that their safety is a priority. See attached "Tips for being an Upstander Guide", given to each student in the program.

We participated in the Advisory Group convened by the Human Rights Commission and support the Options Paper drafted by the Cohesive Communities Coalition.

While the Parliamentary Inquiry into serious Vilification and Hate Crimes is considering reform to the legislation, Courage to Care Queensland strongly urges that options be included for behaviour that falls short of criminal, often witnessed in the school playground, such as restorative justice and other community justice strategies.

Delwyn Cameron, a guidance officer in Queensland schools for over 30 years and one of our Courage to Care Volunteers, supports this in her statement below.

As a Guidance Officer, working mainly in State High Schools for over 30 years, I have come across my fair share of racism, irrational hatred and bullying.

As we know, all schools have bullying policies and teachers regularly receive in-service about the harm of bullying on young people and how as teachers they must intervene if they come across it. However, how best to deal with it is not always so easy nor is it effective.

Schools are a microcosm of our wider society and also reflect the general culture and community that surrounds them.

I have worked in schools with high intakes of refugee students and students from diverse cultural backgrounds. Most refugees have come in waves that have reflected the government policies of the day regarding National intake of refugees in relation to the broader politics of the time. For example, there have been waves of refugees from South Vietnam in the early 80's, Chinese after the Tiananmen Square massacre In the late 80's, refugees caused by the Croatian and Serbian conflict in the early to mid - 90's, refugees fleeing war from Sub Saharan Africa and the Horn of Africa, refugees from Afghanistan, Syria and on it goes.

With each wave comes fear... Fear of difference, fear of the unknown and scapegoating resulting in xenophobia and prejudice. And each wave or world event in itself engenders a rise in more specific racism and hate. An example is after 9/11 the language of taunts heard around the playground was "terrorist". I must say this is an

ongoing theme that extends to our black African students and more often students from the Muslim Faith. These students are now on the receiving end of much racist propaganda which is hysterically whipped up and enflamed by the media.

All of this forms part of the murky underbelly of our society and so naturally also becomes manifested in our schools. However, in schools we have the power to educate, elucidate and broaden young people's still impressionable minds.

Unfortunately, I have found that the automatic response from teachers, and people in authority, is to condemn a young person who is calling out racist taunts by threatening them with consequences of punishment etc. and at best ineffective and is indeed at worst damaging in driving racism even further. Firstly, it confirms the "unfairness" of the top-down nature of the response they receive, which is in itself a form of bullying. Secondly it only reinforces a belief that they are the victims and that the "other" is getting preferential treatment. Thirdly it just pushes it further underground and creates a greater divide. Of course, many of these attitudes in young people can come from the home but what we tend to see in teenagers is more of a tribal and herd mentality which infects and reinforces negative thoughts and behaviours.

So, what do we do to turn this around and how do we affect these negative mindsets of young people?

What I have found to be most effective, in a nutshell, is helping young people develop a sense of EMPATHY for the other. This is no easy or quick fix. It can take the form of various processes and approaches. The most usual way I found worked was to firstly have both parties agree to come to the table and to get across that blame, retribution and punishment is off the table. Secondly, to impress that this is an opportunity to be heard and to listen to in equal measure to each other. Thirdly this is a chance to work out what is a fair and decent way of dealing with how things should and could be that makes it better for everyone. In this mode of respectful listening, it can be useful to use various techniques and processes that help the young person to find commonality rather than difference. Understanding rather than hatred and yes empathy for the other. It is usually two sided and can lead to very positive outcomes.

In broader conflicts involving serious harm that has affected lots of people, the very effective but involved and time-consuming process of Community Accountability Conferencing is a very powerful mode. This process involves layers of Victims expressing the harm they have felt and where the Offenders acknowledge the wrongs they have committed. When managed skilfully there can be amazing long-lasting changes of attitudes and constructive outcomes.

Has vilification increased in recent times? I'm not sure I would say it has. However, we know that it causes deep long-lasting pain to victims and indeed studies show that it also causes very negative life patterns for offenders. The skills and time required to turn such offending around are not simple but schools are or can be better equipped to provide such processes. Over the last 20 years I have trained hundreds of students, in both Secondary and Primary schools, to become Peer Mediators. This has had a very impactful affect in both teaching students how to deal with conflict but also in helping to encourage what it means to sit across from someone and have a chance to hear what it's like to walk in their shoes.

Delwyn Cameron

Higher Dip Creative Industries., Bach Ed., Grad Dip Counselling, Masters Social Science -Counselling.

Thank you accepting our submission,

Yours Sincerely,

Kayla Szumer B.A., Dip. Soc. Work.

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Tips For Being An Upstander.

If you see discrimination, harassment or abuse **YOU** can be an **upstander** by:



SPEAKING UP Saying something IF safe.

- Make it clear you don't agree with what the abuser is saying or doing. Try to be direct, calm, and confident:
- "I wouldn't say that" - an 'I' Statement
- "Why do you say that" - a Question
- "It's against the law to do that" - a Fact



RECORDING IT IF safe.

- Video with your mobile phone
- Note identifying evidence: height, weight, age, hair colour, time, location, car number plate
- Write down as soon as possible what you saw & heard



SUPPORTING THE VICTIM IF safe.

- Get medical help, if needed call 000
- Check if victim is ok
- Comfort victim by your words and your presence



REPORTING IT TO IF safe.

- A Teacher or school authority
- A parent or other trusted adult
- Police: Emergency 000 or Police Link 131 444
- Or Anonymously to: Crime Stoppers 1800 333 000
- Google: Report Racism Queensland and click on the top entry

If you don't feel safe, leave the situation, and then act.

Sometimes the abuse lasts longer if there is an audience. Remove yourself and get help or report the situation. The same applies in the online environment.



**Report
Racism**

