



Our Ref: **Folder ID 5053 DK:CG**

12 March 2021

Committee Secretary
Legal Affairs and Safety Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000
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To the Committee Secretary,

Mount Isa City Council submission to the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee

Please see enclosed submission, made on behalf of Mount Isa City Council, regarding the Youth Justice and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021.

Should you require further information or clarification please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED] or 07 4747 3200.

Yours sincerely

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MOUNT ISA CITY COUNCIL

Submission to:
The Legal Affairs and
Safety Committee on
the Youth Justice and
Other Legislation
Amendment Bill 2021

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1. Introduction

The Mount Isa City Council (Council) welcomes this opportunity to make a submission to the Queensland Parliament's Legal Affairs and Safety Committee on the *Youth Justice and Other Legislations Bill 2021*.

Council is pleased to see the Queensland Government's renewed focus on youth crime as it is a continuing concern within the region. Council acknowledges that the majority of youth crime can be attributed to a relatively small number of offenders. It should be noted that this small number of offenders should not tarnish or take away from the achievements of the majority of young people that are actively involved in the community through sporting groups, schools or service organisations. The vast majority of young people in Mount Isa are not involved in any type of inappropriate behaviour or illegal activities.

Council notes that there are however that the patterns of behaviour that are displayed on a regular basis by a small group of young people in Mount Isa. The issues include but are not limited to the following:

- Breaking and entering
- Larceny
- Hooning
- Vandalism
- Assault and other violent crimes
- Drug and alcohol related crimes

Despite local government holding no jurisdiction per se in relation to crime, Mount Isa City Council acknowledges the community's repeated concerns and in the past Council has been actively facilitating stakeholder meetings in relation to the safety of vulnerable community members and youth crime. It is noted that the total number of offences that occurred in January 2021 was 861.

2. Effective Response Needed

Whilst the amendments outlined within the *Youth Justice and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2021* make steps to achieve policy objectives, the proposed actions may not adequately address youth crime issues in Mount Isa.

Council would like to highlight the following issues to the Committee. These issues may be unique to Mount Isa, although it is highly likely that these issues will be experienced by other regional cities.

- Youth Agency Audit
 - Council believes that there are issues around the number of services, and how they do or do not work together. This issue has been a long-time discussion point in Mount Isa. It would appear that there are a number of agencies involved in dealing with youth, however the actions of these different agencies do not appear to be coordinated in an effective manner or appropriately targeted at reoccurring issues.



- There appears to be competition for resources and funding between the different agencies which results in different agencies being responsible for different services.
 - Considerable budgets are allocated to these services with limited accountability and key performance indicators. Council would be keen to understand the current and future funding to be allocated to manage youth crime in the region.
- Inaccessibility of Youth Services
 - The issue of child safety and youth crime is not limited to business hours and, unfortunately many of the funded services within the City of Mount Isa only operate during normal business hours.
 - Afterhours services would be more appropriately deal with issues created by some of the youth of Mount Isa and would potentially mitigate concerns for vulnerable community members.
- Role of Mount Isa City Council
 - It should be noted that Mount Isa City Council does not have a Youth Strategy, nor does Council have any dedicated youth resources in the form of youth workers.
 - Council would welcome funding to support a Youth Officer.
 - Council perhaps needs to do more in relation to engaging with youth to better understand the needs of youth, especially when designing and construction infrastructure or spaces that will be used by youth, such as basketball courts, skate ramps and active play areas.
 - Mount Isa City Council has a role to play in working with other groups to improve safety in the City. This would include groups such as Crime Stoppers and Safety Committees.
 - Council has a responsibility to reduce crime through appropriate urban design, ensuring that new buildings and structures do not create places where residents do not feel safe or there is the opportunity for people to congregate without appropriate surveillance.
 - The City of Mount Isa will continue to apply for funding to augment the existing CCTV network to ensure that the community has an added sense of safety when moving about the City. Council will work closely with the community and the Queensland Police to place new cameras in the most appropriate locations, including youth crime hotspots.
- Juvenile Detention Centre
 - Council would welcome the opportunity to discuss the potential for the planning and construction of a Juvenile Detention Centre. Mount Isa has the necessary infrastructure such as the courts, medical facilities, youth services and TAFE to support such a facility.
 - The construction of a Youth Detention Centre would also create employment opportunities through its construction and ongoing operations.
 - Council also believes that a Youth Detention Centre could also be potentially linked to employment opportunities for the young people, providing them with a “home” base to transition into employment.
 - A further consideration may be the establishment of a youth training facility that would be located on the outskirts of Mount Isa. This facility would potentially equip young people with farming skills that could be transferred into the agricultural industry in the region.



- **Mentoring and Education**
 - Council submits that there are opportunities to further explore the potential of formalised and informal mentoring. Council believes that there are motivated people in the community that would be prepared to mentor young people if the opportunity was provided.
 - Additionally, Council believes that more monitoring of children should take place throughout primary schools to ensure that children are growing up in a safe and secure environment, where positive role models are easily identifiable.
- **Parental Responsibilities**
 - Council submits that there needs to more education provided or made available to parents in relation to dealing with disengaged youth.
 - Youth programs currently existing could be assessed for quality outcomes and those that are showing deficiencies have the funds diverted to interventionary programs that address parental responsibility and accountability.
 - Early intervention and support for parents who are struggling with their children can often improve the chances for a family to avoid issues related to youth crime.
 - Providing resources and training to parents may change the way parents guide their decision-making processes and make children aware of their responsibilities as a young adult.
 - It may that through training and networking with other parents that families are better equipped to manage the behaviours of their children.
 - Council submits that there will be continual youth recidivism experiences if the loop of parent responsibility and accountability for this youth cohort is not addressed in a meaningful way. Enforcing court ordered formal training for parents of repeat offending youth could address accountability and responsibility issue.
- **School Attendance**
 - It is submitted that young people that attend school on a regular basis are less likely to be involved in criminal activity. Council suggests that every effort should be made to get young people to school and sustain their attendance. If this means supporting young people with uniforms, breakfast and lunch, sporting apparel or financial support this should be considered.
 - Educating a child is a 14-year project and it is important to identify when intervention is needed to support the child and parent go through this journey.
 - Education and interventionary work aimed at parents of repeat truant young could lead to a significant increase in school participation.
- **Bail**
 - Council is not responsible for or involved in any aspect of the bail decision making process. Council does not believe that bail should be offered to repeat offenders, rather age-appropriate facilities should be identified to accommodate offenders. It is noted that in some circumstances it is not safe for young offenders to return home. It is also noted that some offenders will return to the street if bail is granted.



3. Conclusion

Mount Isa City Council will continue to work with the different agencies throughout the region to reduce crime and increase safety. Issues related to youth crime and community safety are unlikely to be resolved in the short term, however through a collective and coordinated approach significant sustained change can be implemented.

It is worth noting that children and youth are the future and any actions or initiatives undertaken now will be reflected in the behaviour of adults in the future and potentially their children.

Council welcomes the review being undertaken by the Committee and looks forward to the recommendations.

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