

Sue Withers

Youth Justice and other legislative
Amendment Bill 2021

16/03/21

I am a grandmother of a 16yr old recidivist offender who is under a child protection order until the age of 18, in Townsville and I have read the proposed changes of this Bill. Please consider my input while looking to amend this Bill.

I would firstly like to mention that last year I woke up to newspaper headline by the Townsville Bulletin, with a photo of my grandson being arrested in handcuffs, with a huge bold headline front page, from memory, saying **BORN TO BE BAD**. I was shocked, heartbroken and contacted the editor of this paper. They gave me an apology and a chance to tell my thoughts. Here is what I wrote (below) and of course, none of these words were published. You can find the human interest story they did write in their archives. Vigilante action against youth crime had started in Townsville at this time. A much more appropriate headline for this story might have been,

Is There a Soft Place To Fall?

Sadly the kids in Cleveland Youth Detention Centre (CYDC) already see themselves as BORN TO BE BAD. There are many reasons as the article pointed out, such as Alcohol foetal syndrome. I say Consider the broken boundaries, fatherless homes, lawlessness and careless parenting. This "all about me" generation consider possessions and wealth a higher priority than the raising of children. What gave us a safer passage through our childhood was a Christian world view. Living Bible Translation says _Proverbs 11v11_ The Good Influence of Godly Citizens causes a City to prosper but the moral decay of the wicked drive it downhill. People were created to thrive in a family and what most of these kids have done is create their own "families" "gangs "where there may not even be a base or food or clothing or any" SOFT PLACE TO FALL." The Streets of Townsville become their home.

The society's rules are ignored, as they feel they have been, and all they have is grief, emptiness and a culture of payback. They are prey to adult drug dealers and encouraged to steal for drugs and alcohol. I personally have fed, clothed and picked up off the street these young children only to see them form stronger bonds with their Gang family ties within CYDC. Emergency Services and others have seen this repetition and many have tried to be effective.

These broken children defy anyone to love them enough to stop them going in to a spiral of crime. Rehabilitation has been jaded at best and the Millions of dollars dished out to contractors, Councillors, Youth Justice, Child Safety, CYDC and others needs to be put back on the table until we have a measure by which we can quantify effective use of this cycle of abuse of funding. Something that does not work should not be repeated. If we all had realistic expectations, from the lawmakers to the care givers, of the effectiveness and the reality of changing the hearts of these young offenders, perhaps we could make some headway. They are hungry for truth and hope and only the acknowledgement of the loving Power of God, our Creator is able to reconstruct such brokenness in Townsville today. Where there is unity there is strength, let's at least start to be honest about the effectiveness of the current use of services.

Sincerely

Sue Withers