



# ***YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM SELECT COMMITTEE***

**Members present:**

Ms SL Bolton MP—Chair  
Ms JM Bush MP  
Mrs LJ Gerber MP  
Mr JP Kelly MP  
Mr JJ McDonald MP  
Mr BL O'Rourke MP  
Mr DG Purdie MP

**Staff present:**

Dr A Beem—Committee Secretary  
Dr K Kowol—Assistant Committee Secretary

## **PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY TO EXAMINE ONGOING REFORMS TO THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME**

### **TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Tuesday, 27 February 2024**

**Rockhampton**

## TUESDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2024

---

### The committee met at 10.30 am.

**CHAIR:** Good morning. Thank you for welcoming us to Rockhampton. I declare open this public hearing for the committee's inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime. My name is Sandy Bolton. I am the member for Noosa and chair of the committee. I would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and pay our respects to elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whose lands, winds and waters we all share.

With me here today are: Jonty Bush MP, member for Cooper and the deputy chair; Laura Gerber MP, member for Currumbin; Jim McDonald MP, member for Lockyer; Dan Purdie MP, member for Ninderry; Joe Kelly MP, member for Greenslopes, as a substitute for the member for Hervey Bay; and Barry O'Rourke MP, member for Rockhampton, as a substitute for the member for Thuringowa.

The purpose of today's proceedings is to assist the committee in its inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland. The focus of this hearing will be on seven priority areas which the committee has identified based on the evidence it has received so far. That has been from submissions and also previous public hearings. These priority areas are: improving support for victims of crime and confidence in the youth justice system; the need for a long-term youth justice strategy; better early assessment, intervention and prevention; improving young people's engagement with therapeutic programs and supporting their transition from detention back into the community; reimagining youth justice infrastructure; and the operation of the Youth Justice Act 1992.

This hearing is a proceeding of the Queensland parliament and is subject to the parliament's standing rules and orders. Only the committee and invited witnesses may participate in the proceedings. Witnesses are not required to give evidence under oath or affirmation, but I remind witnesses that intentionally misleading the committee is a serious offence. I also remind members of the public that they may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the committee.

Witnesses before the committee have called repeatedly on all sides of politics to deliver bipartisan youth justice reform. I would like to restate the bipartisan approach that each member of this committee has committed to in the undertaking of this vital inquiry and, importantly, to leave the colours and the campaigning out of this inquiry. As chair, I remind all members of the committee that questions put to witnesses must be relevant to the inquiry, and it is my expectation that these are asked respectfully and in good faith.

These proceedings are being recorded by the parliament. Media may be present and are subject to the committee's media rules and the chair's direction at all times. You may be filmed or photographed during the proceedings and images may also appear on the parliament's website or social media pages. I ask everyone to please turn your mobile phones off or to silent mode.

I now welcome a representative from the Rockhampton Flexible Learning Centre: Owen Mayor, Head of Campus. Owen is not here yet. Do we have the representatives from the Yoombooda gNugeena Rockhampton Aboriginal and Islander Community Justice Panel: Aunty Esme Wesser and Aunty Delilah MacGillivray? No. We have struck out on two. Do we have a representative from the Darumbal Community Youth Service: Rose Malone, CEO? No.

**Mr Jard:** Rose may not be here, but I am the chairperson of the board of that organisation. I am open to questions if you have any.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Barry. We are just checking who has just arrived. Aunty Esme?

**Ms Wesser:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Has Aunty Delilah arrived yet?

**Ms Wesser:** I am not too sure.

**CHAIR:** Would you prefer to wait for Aunty Delilah?

**Ms Wesser:** Yes.

**Mrs GERBER:** We could always just do the open-floor session now.

**CHAIR:** I could but, first of all, we have Barry here from Darumbal Community Youth Service. Barry, are you quite happy to take some questions or make an opening statement or would you rather wait for Rose?

**Mr Jard:** I would prefer to wait for Rose.

**CHAIR:** Let me just confirm that we will hold you in your slot with Rose. I will just confer with the secretariat to see whether any of those other witnesses are here.

**Mrs GERBER:** Chair, I propose that maybe we could move to the open mic session and allow people from the floor to come up if they wanted to speak to us.

**CHAIR:** Member, I am just conferring with the secretariat as to where we are at. My concern is that shuffling the open-floor session forward suddenly means that those people who have registered may miss out, and I do not want to see that happen because they have gone to great lengths to register. That is why I want to make sure that we still fit everyone in, but I am seeking some advice. Is there anyone else here who was actually registered—that is, was listed to represent their organisations within the program?

**Mrs GERBER:** There is one lady at the back.

**CHAIR:** What is your name?

**Ms Harland:** Lyn Harland from Carinity.

**CHAIR:** OurSpace?

**Ms Harland:** No, not OurSpace. That is Jess. I am happy to speak when Jess speaks later today. We were going to share her half an hour anyway.

**CHAIR:** So you would prefer to wait until then?

**Ms Harland:** Yes, I will wait for Jess.

**CHAIR:** I am going to read out those who are registered for the open-floor session. If there is nobody here then what I would like to do is open the floor until the groups arrive for their session, so we will fit some extra people in. I will read out the names: Leyland Barnett? Yes. Would you like to come forward? For everybody who is here, normally the program starts with organisations that we would be asking questions of. With the open floor, it is the opportunity—and we have had so many who have registered—to share your experience. We will not be asking questions because I do not want a situation that I have had before where everybody felt that it was too contained or they missed out. Please just share your experience and what you would like the committee to know.

### **BARNETT, Mr Leyland, Private capacity**

**Mr Barnett:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have been impacted by crime in the Rockhampton area. We have been broken into two or three times over the years. For me and my wife, it impacts your security and really knocks your confidence around. Plus we went through a lot of expenses in putting on security doors and screens and alarm systems. We had to pretty much lock our house up like Fort Knox. I believe that in this country today we should not be living in fear of being attacked in shopping centres or being attacked in our own homes. We need to have that security.

I put a couple of proposals through. I see there are seven priorities that the committee is looking at. The first priority is a 10-year strategy for youth justice in Queensland. I believe we need to have a look at these reform programs that are in place and we need to have KPIs on these reform programs to assess whether they are delivering what they intend to deliver. There should be some way we can record all of this and see how we are progressing into the future. If we do not, where are we going to be in 10 years time?

The second priority is how to instigate earlier assessment, intervention and prevention. I believe that frontline people such as people who deal with juveniles such as teachers and the police need to be able to intervene at an early stage. If they are not attending school or if they are not engaging in the education system, we need to identify them at an early age and get them into a program to help them get back on track and contribute to community rather than take from the community.

The third priority is reimagining youth justice infrastructure. Children need to be detained in basic accommodation, not in five-star accommodation. We do not want to reward criminal activity in our community. We want to make that point clear to juveniles.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

The fourth priority is how to improve children's and young people's engagement with positive programs. Young children may never have been brought up in a stable family and have no concept of discipline and respect. Before any positive programs can be successfully adopted and engaged in by the child, I believe that a program needs to address the child's self-esteem and understanding of respect for themselves and others in our community. We really need to look at programs that will specifically tackle self-esteem and those areas. Young people need a good leader or mentor to assist them back into the community. An authority figure needs to be someone they can trust and be guided by. If we look at a military sergeant in the army, they have a lot of respect from the troops as they are expected to lead them and assist them into battle. The same needs to happen, I believe, with our young offenders today. They need a mentor; they need assistance to get back on the right track.

The fifth priority is the current operation of the Youth Justice Act 1992. I believe that detention as a last resort for serious repeat offenders needs to be removed. We have to look at the situation: if there are 15 per cent of repeat offenders committing 80 per cent of the crime in our community, what would happen if we took that 15 per cent out of the community and put them into rehabilitation programs? We would obviously see an immediate drop in crime problems. The police do such a great job in catching these offenders, but it is not long after that they are released back into the community. We need to stop this catch and release cycle and somehow put the handbrake on this problem. I believe an immediate fix for our community is to pull them out of our community and try to get them into rehabilitation programs.

The sixth priority is how to strengthen public confidence in the youth justice system, including by examining the impact of social media and traditional news media on youth offending and community perceptions of safety. The only way to improve public confidence and perceptions of safety through social media and news media is to see that justice is applied to the criminal and the criminal is removed immediately out of the community to prevent further crimes from happening. The more that repeat offenders get released after capture, the more that dangerous activities happen. We only have to look at that 70-year-old lady who was killed in broad daylight in Ipswich in front of a six-year-old girl while doing just the basic shopping. That was absolutely tragic. The other thing we need to do is show the data of these programs to show the success stories and the failures so the community can get a grip on what these programs are like and if they are going to fix our problems and if we are on the correct track.

The seventh priority is how to improve youth justice system responses to victims and ensure they are able to access support services across the state. Victims of crime need immediate help and counselling from police and associated support services. The crime impacts victims in that they no longer feel safe in their homes or in public places. We should not have to lock our homes up like Fort Knox as we live in a free democratic country. We do live in a free democratic society and we deserve to live in our communities without fear of juvenile criminals stealing, destroying property and, in some cases, murdering. This needs to stop immediately, and all powers need to work together in a unified approach towards the solutions.

Intervention at an early stage is essential to stop problems escalating to what they are today. Discipline and respect need to be taught. If families are unfit to follow through, then they need to be removed into a better environment where they will get the support to lead a better life supporting our communities instead of destroying our communities. Military school would teach discipline and respect as well as life skills. This may well be a good path for repeat offenders.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much. Have you put a submission in?

**Mr Barnett:** Yes. I put this copy through.

**CHAIR:** That is wonderful. Thank you so much. We really appreciate that. I would now like to call on Bridgette Birda? No. Serafi Tiaaleaiga? No. Jason Thomasson? No. Mabel Wooler? Yes. Mabel, would you like to come to the table? I know it is earlier than the 1.30 pm time slot.

**Ms Wooler:** I was going to say something similar to what Leyland has said.

**CHAIR:** Have you put in a submission in yet?

**Ms Wooler:** No.

**CHAIR:** Will you put one in? This section of the consultation finishes on Friday. Would you be able to get us something by then?

**Ms Wooler:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We would really appreciate it. I would now like to call on Vishal Nand? No. Gayle Vea Vea? No. Brad Neven? Yes. Brad, would you like to come to the table?

**NEVEN, Mr Brad, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Would you like to share your experiences with us? Have you put a submission in yet?

**Mr Neven:** No, I have not,

**CHAIR:** Will you be able to?

**Mr Neven:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** Wonderful. Thank you.

**Mr Neven:** We are the victims of the crimes that are happening in our region. The first thing I want to ask the committee is: who here at the table has had someone break into their home while you are home? We are all experiencing it. It is a sense of helplessness. Where do you turn? Turn up to a committee and share your feelings, but feelings are not the answer. Everyone in the community is feeling distraught and helpless with respect to what is going on.

To paint a picture, it is 6.30 in the morning and everyone is home—people in showers, that sort of stuff. It is all on video. Five people break into your home. They are going into rooms where people are asleep and grabbing car keys, wallets, phones—whatever they can—and they are a bit brazen about it. There is no fear. We are a busy street. People are out walking their dogs. They have got a broken vehicle. They were on a rampage that particular night from Emu Park in a stolen Prado. They drive along the streets, they walk along and they flick all the doors. Once they find an unlocked car then they look for the keys in the car. Then if there are no keys in the car they go into the house. If there is an unlocked door, happy days; if not, they are breaking in. There is just no fear of consequence for them. I do not know if you have seen the Instagram tags, the social media tags. You just have to go to their tags and they are up there saying, openly, 'We are coming for you.' The way it makes everyone feel is like in our household. My wife wants to sell the house. She says, 'I can't live here. Don't speak up, don't say anything, because'—sorry, it is a bit—

**Mr McDONALD:** Brad, you are doing very well.

**CHAIR:** Take your time. You do not have to rush.

**Mr Neven:** The fear is: don't speak up because they'll see you speaking up on social media and then re-target you. What are you supposed to do? The poor old coppers behind us bust their balls to track down these kids. Like the previous submitter said before, there do not appear to be any consequences that they are afraid of. There is no consequence that will deter them from doing it. In fact, 'If I get caught, it is a badge of honour. If I get caught, I'm actually going back to school. If I get put away, whether it is in juvie or the big house, it is a badge of honour because I'm going back to school.'

It is obviously a wicked problem and there is no panacea for it. With all the talk of early intervention—I forget one of the points you made—it sounded like if we hold hands and sing 'kumbaya' we will transition to some utopia of youth intervention. It just is rubbish. It just seems that the more you look into the problem the harder it will be to solve, but the bottom line is action consequence. That is the real world. Unfortunately, maybe the action consequence needs a little bit of a tweak in the sense that they feel it is a badge of honour to go back to the big house and 'whoever is my mentor is teaching me a few more skills, a few more tricks for next time not to get caught'. They send them back out into the real world, they send them back out to engage in their contacts, and the boys in blue are back to square one.

I know these laws are put in place for reasons, but I feel like they are draconian and have unintended consequences. For example, there is a no-chase policy—disengage—that is going to put the public at risk. That is going to give the public more safety? Well, there are people dying anyway. The innocent are dying from these crimes already when the police cannot do their job. They are trained, competent and authorised, surely, to intervene and chase down these criminals who know that 'as soon as I put the foot down in these stolen vehicles they have to disengage' and they are gone. They might know the names or the tags of some of these people. They do not have the resources to sit outside and do surveillance on a 15-year-old kid who is going home. They are out there trying to chase and track down other, more serious criminals, but that is where it starts. Unfortunately for them, they do not have the resources and when they do have the resources they fly up SERT or whoever it is to track down these criminals and catch them. In my instance, they caught them the next day. Because they were on a major rampage, I think they flew SERT up and they caught them the next day—and congratulations to them.

The other end of the scale is that, unfortunately for us, you never know what happens to them. You are not allowed to know the names because they are juveniles. We had a couple of adults and juveniles in our instance. They are with grown-ups, but you never find out the result unless you ring up with your case number and say, 'Hey, what happened to these people?' Your wife or your kids are saying, 'I wonder if those blokes and kids are going to turn up again tonight,' because we do not know. Did they go to jail? Did they go to juvie or whatever the case may be? You never get the closed loop—the communication loop.

I will just close out by saying that is the sort of sense in our household and the feeling is, 'Don't speak up. They are watching on social media. They are openly saying, "We are coming for you."' We support the boys in blue 1,000 per cent. They are doing a fantastic job. I do not feel they have enough resources and I do not feel the consequences are strong enough or there are the right consequences to deter these people from reoffending. I am sure there are smarter people in the room who will come up with solutions for that, but they cannot take three years to implement. It needs to be a bipartisan approach by both sides to get to the root cause and put in place real consequences for these individuals; otherwise, we will just all be here in three years time having the same conversation.

**Mrs GERBER:** May we ask some questions of the witness?

**CHAIR:** You can ask one question, because I did say that we were not going to ask questions so we can fit more people in to talk. However, I will allow you one and one from this side.

**Mrs GERBER:** Thank you, Brad, for sharing your story. It is so important that we hear from victims and that we are listening to the voice of victims. Based on what you said, do you have a sense of fear that your community might try to take things into their own hands because police do not have the resources or the laws to do what they need to do? I am getting a sense of urgency from you.

**Mr Neven:** I will answer with a bit of a story, if that is okay. Ironically, after my event there was another event where these individuals—and I am not going to have the facts right, so I am presuming I am not under oath or anything because I do not know the full story—broke into the house of a mother with a young baby. She woke up and saw these individuals looking at her. Her brother happened to then—

**CHAIR:** Can I confirm it is currently not before the courts? I have to watch sub judice.

**Mr Neven:** I have no idea.

**Mr PURDIE:** Was anyone arrested for it?

**Mr Neven:** I have no idea.

**CHAIR:** We might have to be careful around that.

**Mr Neven:** I am not naming any names or anything like that. It is just a story.

**CHAIR:** If you share a generic story.

**Mr Neven:** This individual, this brother, had had enough. He formed a Facebook page and said, 'We're going to have a community rally,' and he had a community rally. Unfortunately, it looks like it may have got out of hand and unproven addresses of where these individuals live—it looked like the mob went to those addresses and the boys in blue had to turn up and try to move those people along. That is what people want to do. They are out there on Reddit or whatever, these amateur detectives, trying to track down these individuals. They are out there doing that now.

I feel like, because you have a sense of helplessness, that gives you something to feel like you have done something at least to try to turn the tide. I do not believe it is the right course of action to be vigilantes. I do not believe that they intended to be vigilantes, but when you get a mob mentality happening and they are all frustrated and they are all feeling helpless, as if there is nothing they can do, unfortunately that is the direction people will take. I am not condoning that, 100 per cent. I did not participate and I would never do that.

**CHAIR:** We have to be so careful around these matters. I will allow one question from this side and then we will go back to our program.

**Mr KELLY:** I do not have a question, Chair. I just think, based on the information that was just shared, it is quite easy to identify the incidents that were being referred to. I am not sure whether they are before the courts or not, but I would hate that any matters that are raised in this place would see somebody who should be before courts and treated fairly and convicted if that is appropriate suddenly given a leave pass. I almost wonder whether or not that testimony should be redacted from the proceedings. I would seek your ruling.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

**CHAIR:** My apologies. We jumped straight into open session. Normally I am able to talk about the things we can and cannot talk about. My apologies for that. Thank you, Brad.

**Mr Neven:** Can I just respond to that? This is the community we are living in: 'We can't say anything because something is before the courts or we might offend someone or it might offend that community over there or those people over there, so let's go back and put up the shutters and put bars on our house and not say anything. I will sit in darkness and not say anything because I am afraid to offend someone.' I hear what you are saying, that people need to have due process. That is why we live in this country, but also why we live in this country is that we should not have to lock up our doors.

**Mrs GERBER:** The rights of victims should come first.

**CHAIR:** Brad, what I was referring to is what is called sub judice. We do not want to have a situation where justice is delayed or not served because it was spoken of outside of that court. It is actually to protect the victims, to make sure they have their day in court. That is all.

**Mr Neven:** Sure.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much, Brad. Bless you.

**MacGILLIVRAY, Aunty Delilah, Elder, Yoombooda gNugeena Rockhampton Aboriginal and Islander Community Justice Panel**

**WESSER, Aunty Esme, Elder, Yoombooda gNugeena Rockhampton Aboriginal and Islander Community Justice Panel**

**CHAIR:** Aunty Delilah and Aunty Esme, welcome and thank you for joining us. You have the opportunity to make an opening statement and then the committee would like to ask you some questions. Would you like to tell us about the work that you do, some of the challenges that you are faced with and anything else that you would like to share?

**Ms Wesser:** You got the name right: it is Yoombooda gNugeena. It is a Darumbal word from the traditional owners here in Rockhampton and the CQ area. It means, 'Listen, we have something to say.' That covers everything: not just the courts but even the youth that we deal with, mainly the Indigenous youth and also the different stakeholders in the Rockhampton community. We have youth Murri Court twice a month in Rockhampton. We have a panel of up to 10 elders and we have a community justice group. They are also part of the community justice group and not part of the Murri Court.

One of our biggest challenges is getting the children to court. I am there most Tuesdays. I try to get there every Tuesday because we do have Childrens Court here in Rockhampton. It is very frustrating to see some of the children, because the offences they have committed they do not take seriously. They are all too busy high-fiving each other. I get frustrated by that. Most of the time they do not turn up with their parents. I just have to be honest in what I am telling you. This is honest because I see it most Tuesdays when I go to court.

Our role is to work in with most of the stakeholders: the Magistrates Court, the police prosecutor, the Magistrates Court staff and also Youth Justice.

**Ms MacGillivray:** And Legal Aid.

**Ms Wesser:** We generally have a good rapport with all of those services. There are about three or four magistrates here and they are pretty good. I think they are frustrated, too, by what is going on in the Rockhampton community. Some of our hands are tied and their hands are tied. I know that at the moment the media is not allowed in the Childrens Court here in Rockhampton but we are allowed to go into the Magistrates Court. One of our elders is allowed to go in under the Youth Justice Act, the Penalties and Sentences Act, the Bail Act and another act that I cannot think of. That is all legislation that has passed through parliament. We sit under the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. We answer to the minister, the Attorney-General. We also answer to the director of the Department of Justice and Attorney-General. We definitely have to keep our data up to date and inform Brisbane of what we are doing weekly, monthly and quarterly. Even though we are funded by them, we are still answerable to those departments.

**CHAIR:** Aunty Delilah, is there anything more to add before we go to questions?

**Ms MacGillivray:** Yes. I also acknowledge that we are having this conversation on the traditional lands of the Darumbal people so I pay my respects. I sit here today as a private person and part of the Yoombooda gNugeena community justice group and elders. I want to put another perspective on this conversation. We have lived long enough to see the hurt and the pain. The gentleman who spoke before us talked of the hurt and the pain of seeing our children in the community and all cultures being impacted by behaviour that we do not condone. I heard Aunty Esme saying that we do not get the parents turning up at court. We do sometimes, and I guess the participation of parents and families is an important factor in all of this. We are talking about single families and all sorts of combinations of families, which is very different to how I grew up in this community over 60 years ago with two-parent families. That is the context here. That is overlaid by poverty and other things that impact on the decisions that not only adults make but also young people themselves in a home that might at times be chaotic. That is the context, but it is not an excuse for that behaviour.

What we see is a continuum, as the gentleman talked about, of prevention and early intervention. Then, at the other end we have statutory responses. Of course we have to have policing strategies, because without law we have chaos. That is the context. The conversations we have been having within the community justice group and thinking about those young people we continually see—it is the same ones. We are not talking about the whole community of young people here. We are talking about a cohort, and it is intergenerational. We know that some of them are the same families. If we think about it, we can think back 30 or 40 years and see the generations and see that is continuing today. That is the context of this. Yes, we do have to be working. We have had lots of



conversations with stakeholders. We have stakeholder meetings and we think about how we can do this differently and how we can turn the dial so that we get families involved. I am cognisant of time and that you want to ask questions.

I am one of 13. I have a young person in my family who was on that trajectory to the big house. If it was not for Arthur—bless him, I cannot remember his last name—that young person in our family would probably be in the adult big house. He saw that with this 17-year-old boy of ours there was something happening. Credit to him, he sent him to the mental health unit up at the Rockhampton Hospital and that trajectory stopped. That boy is a young man now; he is 28. He is no longer offending. It took that intervention and it was really purposeful.

What is missing here is a family centred approach, which is the prevention and early intervention. There is a policy gap here. All of our policies are driven by statutory responses. I think in Rockhampton it is going to take time, as the previous gentleman said. There is some urgency, because people in their homes at night cannot sleep because they are afraid to sleep. We know we have to address that at this point in time, but we cannot lose sight of what needs to be done so that we can turn this dial and do some real work, which is about intensive work. Mitch tried a few weeks ago. Some of you will know him. It is worth an effort if we are really going to close this gap and also for our whole population in this community. It is not about just one subset of the community; it is about the whole community feeling safe.

I will stop there. I wanted to put the context that the work we are doing in the community justice group is intentional and purposeful, because this is about keeping our young people out of prison and out of detention centres—and our adults. There are too many of our people in those systems. This is about changing that for future generations.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you, Delilah and Esme. Very well spoken, Delilah. I can see that you have had a lot of experience. In your address you talked about this being a matter of urgency. One of the things the committee is looking at is a suite of changes from parenting to education, but there is a big issue around compulsion. What do you think about compelling kids to participate in programs earlier to break that cycle and have consequences for actions?

**Ms MacGillivray:** We cannot compel young people to do anything, really. That is a statutory response. I am a reader. I read everything. If someone says something then I will read the opposite. We are not going to compel young people. We are already trying to do that through the statutory systems. This is really about understanding young people and the assets they have that they can contribute. These young people have talents. We just have to pull up, but not from a statutory response. Yes, of course, the response could be to start there and work back, but we have to understand what is driving them and their passion. There is a lady who can speak for herself here today. There are lots of people in the community trying to look at this differently. It is about understanding young people. I have access to young people in my family but I do not have access to young people across the community, although a lot of services do.

Really, it is about how our services are working with these young people, how they are understanding the assets and the contributions that these young people can make in this community and then how we harness that so they are actually part of the decision-making. They need to understand their behaviour and how it is impacting on someone else, but also it is about being part of the design process. It takes days and weeks to have conversations with young people. You have to get them out of the bed in the first place. I have been through that. But then you have to have real conversations: 'How do you think you could do this differently?'

Also, going back, we need their families involved, or at least the caregivers or the people who have the most positive influence on that young person. It may not be someone in my family. In my family, the kids know that I am the growly aunty but they will still come to me and want my support. It is about understanding who it is in that family who is a positive influence or who outside the family might be able to support them.

**Ms BUSH:** I want to pick up on the points that Leyland and Brad made around accountability and consequences for actions. As a committee, throughout the public hearings we have heard that detention is not a deterrent for some of these young people and the framework behind a Murri Court and the community justice groups is to give that cultural overlay, but actually young people would prefer not to go through those programs; they would rather go to detention than engage with your programs, for shame or whatever reasons. What can we do? I do not want to say 'silver bullet', but what can we do to support you to get a better outcome there so that we can get them more engaged with your programs and still hold them accountable and make them do that work?

**Ms Wesser:** Some of these children have fetal alcohol spectrum syndrome and mental health issues. There was a team coming up from Brisbane nearly every Tuesday to the Childrens Court to assist some of the children that required their mental health to be examined or tested, because a lot of them are suffering from mental health. The NDIS is another thing that they struggle with. I have not seen the youth mental health team from Brisbane for over a year now, and it is a shame that they are not back on board because most of the children we saw needed to be assessed by the mental health team. They are no longer there. No-one is there and no-one is putting their hand up.

**Ms BUSH:** You mean assessed in the community, not wait—

**Ms Wesser:** In the community, yes.

**Ms BUSH:** Okay; I understand.

**Ms MacGillivray:** Probably over 10 years ago, myself and two elders went down to the detention centre in Brisbane. We talked to some of the young people down there and we talked to the officers at the detention centre, and we identified that the exit plans really need to have a transition strategy. Some of our young people cannot go back into the same families because of what is going on in the family. I am not going to put any names on any of that, but there are complexities in a family. I think what is missing here—and we see it with child protection—is that we need to look at this across the silos so there are transition strategies and transitional support and housing for young people when they come back so that they can actually come to a place with some wraparound to support them until not only they are ready to go back in the family but also the families are ready. The service system is not designed to necessarily do that.

We still have the issue of the service system not being integrated and siloed, so this needs to be designed to make it work. For example, there is short-term accommodation. I have seen services run around at night trying to find a place when a young person has exited from the child protection system. They have turned 18 and they have to go back into the community but there are no transitional places. It is the same thing from the correctional centres, including the adult system. Those transitional housing accommodation supports are just not there with that wraparound in there. Then at the same time, those who are paid to work with the families work with the family and then try to work to bring that young person and family together. You are right: some young people just go there because their friends are there or their relatives are there, and we do not want that. That is not the best place for our young people. That is only part of it, but that is a big gap at the moment.

**Ms Wesser:** For most of them, when they come home from detention they are just going back to a home where, I have to be honest, sometimes there is no food in the house, the electricity is off and they have to share a bed with someone else, so it is very hard. I hate to say it, but most of the parents are on Centrelink benefits, so that household is a struggle. It is just a continual struggle to put food on the table. I am not making excuses for them because sometimes they know where the money is going—it is not into the household or food—but, in saying that, there are good parents out there. I know there are good parents out there. I was raised by good parents, so they are out there.

**Ms MacGillivray:** I also want to put a cultural lens on this. It is really important—and I know Inspector Ben Carroll is sitting behind me, as are others in the service system—that we understand the cultural supports that are needed around healing. We have to put that into context that we have traditional owner groups and we have historical people. People are here because of colonisation policies that brought families here, including my mother, and other historical people. If we put a cultural lens over that then we need our language, our culture, our dance and our cultural programs to support our young people in understanding what their family story is.

Because of how many of our families have ended up in this part of the country, they do not understand and have not been back. I have been lucky. I was able to go back to country and take my daughters back to Kalkatungu country. A lot of families do not have that, so there is a healing process that needs to be embedded and a cultural lens that needs to be embedded in the way we work, not only with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people but also other people in the community that are impacted or have young children in these systems. We really need to understand that, because we know that knowing the connection to their stories—their family stories—helps them to be strong young people. It is not just a mainstream response to this, so that is really important in any design here. That does not mean that one thing has to stop while something else happens; we need all of this to be happening at the same time.

**Mrs GERBER:** Thank you very much for your time this morning. Could you speak to the committee a bit more about the work that your justice group does and the Murri Court does? How many kids would get referred from YJ, or is it the Magistrates Court? Sometimes the court opposite can refer them to the Murri Court. How many kids would you get referred a week? How many children

are you currently supporting and dealing with? How many volunteers do you have and what are the needs of your justice group? I know that is a long question but it is very broad, which will allow you to talk about anything.

**Ms Wesser:** It is mainly the lawyers who do it—ATSILS, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service. They will see the children that apply to us, and I do speak to the youth justice team. They are pretty good. They just give me a heads-up rundown of who they think might be suitable for the youth Murri Court. It is very hard to engage the children in the youth Murri Court because some of the children are like, 'I'll plead guilty to this matter but I won't plead guilty to the other matter.' Once you come through the youth Murri Court, you must plead guilty on all matters. They are the conditions of the youth Murri Court. We can let them plead guilty on some and let the other matters get adjourned to another date, but it is generally very hard to get them to hear all of the offences. Sometimes they have more than 10 offences or even longer than that in terms of offences.

**Mrs GERBER:** So how many referrals would you get a week?

**Ms Wesser:** Not many but we—

**Ms MacGillivray:** That is for youth.

**Ms Wesser:** Yes, that is for youth. Yes, that is for youth—not many. Like I said, it is very hard. We used to get a lot before, but that is going back about 10 years ago. It is very hard at the moment. We are struggling, yes.

**Ms MacGillivray:** We probably get one or two every three months.

**Ms Wesser:** Every three months, yes.

**Mrs GERBER:** Is it a system, then? Can you talk to us about how you might see that being improved?

**Ms Wesser:** The system is that they have to do reports—three reports through the elders. There is an entry report, there is a progress report and then there is a final sentencing report. For some of the children and some of the families it is hard to engage them. That is the problem: it is very hard to engage them.

**Ms MacGillivray:** Therein lies the issue. We have talked about the parenting—that is, trying to come with the children. One is about families understanding the court system: what is the benefit of turning up and supporting your child at court and speaking for them or even speaking to the solicitors? We have to remember as well that a lot of families have other children, so they cannot just pack their house of five, or three kids or babies, and find transport to get to court to support their kids and all of those things.

Then there are issues in terms of knowing what their rights are when they go to court before they even make a decision about how they should plead, so there are those sorts of things. It is the young person's choice: 'I was better off. I'll just go and do this another way or not turn up to court at all.' That is why we are speaking to another piece of work with the—I hope I have this right—community-based crime action committee that we were talking about and working with Youth Justice and the police. As it was then, there were 21 young people who were on the serious repeat offender index and maybe having a go at working across the system and looking at those 21 young people. We do not know whether those 21 young people are three families or four families or two families, but once we have a look at that, how can we do some intensive work around those 21 young people to try and have a go at turning this curve? That gives the opportunity then to bring in all of those services that have access to those young people to have a go at trying to then bring the families in and try and do some of this a bit differently, because more of the same is going to get the same results, so we have to have a go at something different here.

There is a lovely piece of work happening in the Walgett community with Yuwaya Ngarra-li with the Dharriwaa Elders Group. They are just about to release a paper this week around some work that they are doing there around data and around strategies around young people, education-to-work strategies and dealing with issues not dissimilar to this. It is not my place to talk about the Walgett community, but my point is about how we can learn from other jurisdictions and see what results they are getting. We have already had some discussions about it—that is, how we can do something different here that really gives us a chance to have a go at this but to be driven by the community. There are a couple of other initiatives in the community that involve the whole community, so maybe that is about how we get the community to sit down and yarn about this and say, 'How can we all work? What does everyone know?' and just have some conversations about this, as opposed to being a media thing or a policing thing or a—

**Ms Wesser:** Or a black thing.

**Ms MacGillivray:** Yes, you can say that.

**Ms Wesser:** Or a black thing.

**Ms MacGillivray:** Yes, or a black thing.

**CHAIR:** We are just about out of time, but I really want to allow at least one more question.

**Mr O'ROURKE:** Hello, aunties, and thank you for being here today. It is very much appreciated. Aunty Delilah, you were talking about stakeholder engagement. In various locations we hear that the relationship between the organisations and the department of youth justice is not great. What is your experience here in Rockhampton and Central Queensland about stakeholder engagement, information sharing and working across government agencies?

**Ms MacGillivray:** I have been back in Rockhampton for 24 years now. There are stages of maturity, and then of course we know we have changes of governments. The community is the constant here. In terms of your question, there have been all sorts of government driven processes. We have had stakeholder meetings and all of that, and they are good and we need that. A lot of organisations get funding to do this work around families and that is really important. We are seeing a real maturity in the sector, particularly around our conversations around the justice group and how we can all identify where the gaps are in the service system and get that data.

We have asked our coordinator for the Yoombooda gNugeena community justice group that if they see gaps in the system to let our coordinator know so we can actually do something about it. We might be able to do something locally, or it might be about how we send that up the line to whatever agency needs to know about it and hopefully it comes back down and we get more. I am not convinced that we need more money, but that is just me. There are a lot of people doing a lot of work with the same set of families in this community. I think we have to look at all of that data and then decide what is missing, whether it is money or asking a service to work a bit differently. That takes a bit of maturity in a service sector and someone has to drive it, whether that is a collective or whoever we decide who is going to represent the community. The community justice group is well placed to work and we are working with the wider community sector. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are only a small percentage of this population. We need the wider community to support us in this work.

I hope that answered your question. I am seeing a level of maturity but that has to be sustained. We have to talk about sustainability here, because we have two elections coming up. Some things might change but the community is a constant, so how does the community work together to find the solutions? What everybody is looking for here, regardless of what cultural perspective we come from, is to be able to live economically and independently, to be healthy, to feel safe—all of those things that every human being wants and needs.

**CHAIR:** Aunties, I want to thank you both. Have you put a submission in because I have not seen one?

**Ms MacGillivray:** No.

**CHAIR:** Is there anything that you have not shared with us today?

**Ms Wesser:** We can put a submission in.

**CHAIR:** That is due by Friday.

**Ms Wesser:** Friday? Okay.

**CHAIR:** Do you mind also if we send through some questions that we did not get to ask? I had a number of questions. I ask everybody that so it gives us an opportunity to write to you so we can fill in some of the gaps.

**Ms MacGillivray:** Are we able to have that sent through to the coordinator? Kylie Bob is our central coordinator for those sorts of questions.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. I wish you both the best. Thanks for your time.

**JARD, Mr Barry, Chair, Darumbal Community Youth Service**

**MALONE, Ms Rose, Chief Executive Officer, Darumbal Community Youth Service**

**WOODALL, Ms Kiah, Manager, Youth Justice Program, Darumbal Community Youth Service**

**CHAIR:** Welcome. I invite you to make an opening statement and then the committee will have questions.

**Ms Malone:** I do not have an opening statement. We are happy to take questions.

**CHAIR:** Would you like to tell us about some of the work you do as well as the challenges you have been confronted with? You would understand that with what we are trying to do there is no silver bullet; it is a silver buckshot, so we are after every bit of information we can be given to create greater safety in our communities.

**Ms Malone:** Kiah is in charge of our youth justice program. We do a bail support as well as a Walali Bili program, which is about mentorship. Some of the biggest challenges we have are around the procurement of funding and things like that, as you might have already heard. We had a recent thing where we applied for some funding and it was not successful, and that is okay, but it went to another organisation which did not do their due diligence and follow up. Youth Justice have a part to play in that because they need to make sure the funding is going to the right place and they are able to deliver it. Do you want me to elaborate a bit more on that?

**CHAIR:** Yes. Also, I am checking if you have put a submission in.

**Ms Malone:** We did not, but we can get one in.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**Ms Malone:** That is not a problem. We applied for some funding, and it was a significant amount of money over three years. We thought we had a pretty good chance. It was based around cultural input for young boys. We believe that if you get kids back involved with their culture it gives them another interest. They have a family, they have a belonging and they will be less likely to offend or be out late at night doing things like that. The funding actually went to an organisation from Brisbane. They were delivering it in a discrete community but the discrete community did not know anything about it. Consequently, it has not been delivered. That is a huge fail in my eyes. They have approached us, and I will let Kiah talk to that because she was the person they approached to see if we could get it running.

**Ms Woodall:** We were approached by this organisation around doing a program and us having some kind of partnership for it. We had the meeting and we canvassed a few options. However, nothing really eventuated from that and there has been no contact since. The program sounds really good in theory but it was missing that basic grassroots level, that connection, that priority around connecting with our young people. It was more directive, I suppose: 'This is the course. This is how we are going to do it.' I had concerns about how we were going to make it happen for our young people if it was not based around connection and their needs. We have not really heard anything back since.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you for being here today. I appreciate the work you do in the community. Hearing that story about funding going to somewhere else is crazy, so thank you for sharing that with us. What can we do to help you with your community? We have heard that support and assistance from families in communities is very critical. How can we help change things up here?

**Ms Malone:** I think we need to be more culture-based. Our biggest problem is that Aboriginal people—and I will say it is more Aboriginal than Torres Strait Islander young people in this community—do not make up a big section of the community but they are over-represented and we are all well aware of that. I think it is assistance with that, and I think it is about letting us do our business. We are the ones who know what sits best for us so let us do our business. Do not let it be government driven and that 'you must do this' and 'tick this box' and things like that.

**Mr McDONALD:** Do people from Rockhampton in your community have to go to Brisbane for services?

**Ms Malone:** For youth justice?

**Mr McDONALD:** Mental health.

**Ms Malone:** Yes. Even things like a rehab centre for young people is not available here.

**Mr McDONALD:** Is that in Brisbane?

**Ms Malone:** I do not know of any in Rocky. Actually, I do not think it is in Brisbane; I think it is in Toowoomba or somewhere. You have a big problem. We go on and off with chroming and things like that. Mental health is a big problem, with the introduction of the drugs. We have had kids who try a certain drug and that is it; they are gone. They have to be sent to Brisbane for a mental health facility.

**Mr McDONALD:** Why aren't those services up here?

**CHAIR:** That is what we are going to find out.

**Ms BUSH:** I can see from your website that you run a whole range of programs, including an elders cautioning project and some bail support programs. Can you give us a sense of what you are doing that is working well in this community?

**Ms Woodall:** I was kind of feeding onto the last conversation as well. I think what is working really well is that connection. Before this role, I was in a lot of case management roles. Moving through government and other NGOs, it seems that case management uses very conventional models that just do not work for our mob. I think what we do well at Darumbal is: if the target is to reduce offending, we know we are not going to jump to that straightaway. We need to start with connection. We need to build trust and rapport and understand a young person's story. I think that is a key factor that is missing in a lot of services. If it is missing, that makes the young people think, 'They don't care about me. I don't want to go there. It's full of paperwork and it's not my language.' At Darumbal, that is something we do well. That is our focus: connection. 'What is your story? What are we going to do? You're the boss in this. We're just here to support.'

One of the other things that we do quite well is the mentoring. While our staff are case managers, they know that they are equally mentors in this community. It is having the professional boundaries but also catering specifically to say, 'You're a human. I get that. Let's work together.' It is breaking down those barriers that are built into conventional case management.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you again for what you do. How long have you been operating? How many kids are you managing at the moment? How many kids have you helped overall?

**Ms Malone:** I have only been the CEO for the last two years so it is a bit of a big question. The Darumbal Community Youth Service is approaching 30 years. As for the number of kids, I really could not answer that off the top of my head.

**CHAIR:** Are you happy to take that on notice?

**Ms Malone:** Yes.

**Mr PURDIE:** Barry, have you been doing this for a bit longer? Can you tell us a bit more about the cohort of kids you are helping and the numbers?

**Mr Jard:** I cannot help you with the number, either. That is not something I was prepared for at this time. However, I do have some things to say. I know you have some questions but I cannot answer that one. There is something I want to say to the committee and I hope it does not annoy too many people.

We are looking for answers to the youth crime problem—everyone is looking for answers—and it should not be treated as a political football. Unfortunately, it is. Last year we missed a golden opportunity nationally with the Voice referendum. That failed but we have seen since then that South Australia has taken on a state initiative. For more solutions to be brought to the table to resolve a lot more of these issues and prevent them from occurring in the future, I would hope our governments in Queensland could be bipartisan in the way they approach things like youth crime and not treat it as a political football. There are many solutions out there in the community that our people can help with. We do have that information. The Voice was supposed to give us access to government departments so that we could talk to senior bureaucrats and help them with their policy and program development. We are also aware of things like efficiency and effectiveness regarding expenditure of government money. That is our money as well. It is all of our money. It is taxpayers' money. We are all looking for a better result from that.

It is my wish that our governments and the opposition tackle this as a bipartisan approach. We will have a lot more success if that is the case. I imagine that if Queensland was to embark on a Voice initiative or something similar to it, and we had constant advice going to senior bureaucrats in departments who make the decision on how this money is spent, then we would get better outcomes for all of us. This would not just be a once-a-year thing, where your committee comes to our community, asks us for solutions and we give you what we can; it would be an ongoing thing if we

could make something like the Voice succeed. We all benefit from that—all of our children. The solutions that come from that can be shared widely across the community as well. I am looking for a global sort of solution to this, not just something that works in my backyard. I think everyone needs it and we should not be afraid of taking that on. I appreciate that time is precious. Thank you very much, Chair, for taking my response.

**Mr O'ROURKE:** Thank you for the work that you do here. I know you do an excellent job in our community. Yes, you have been around for a hell of a long time; that is for sure. With the previous presenters, I spoke a little bit about the engagement across community and whether there are barriers around the information sharing across the sector, across government. Would you like to make a comment in that space around how you see that working or not working?

**Ms Malone:** We appreciate confidentiality and we understand there has to be confidentiality around our young people. If we do not have that and it leaks out, that young person is branded for the rest of their natural life. I think there is a better way. I tell you now: if I was a kid and came to Youth Justice in the first instance, you have to give all your heart and soul there. They refer them to a place like Darumbal and we ask exactly the same questions. Heaven forbid if they happen to be a part of Child Safety because then it is the same questions all over again. We have to have a better way. It would annoy me—and I am using nice words now—if that happened to me, and that is as an adult. I have a lot more restraint than some of the kids. I believe we can do a lot better in that space because it is about what is in the best interests of the young person. It is not about us keeping all the information to ourselves; it is about what is in the best interests of the young person—making them feel valued, making them feel a part of our society. That is what we have to do.

**Mr McDONALD:** This question might go to you, Kiah, given the youth work you do. I fully understand the principle of self-determination. We know there is a lot of early intervention work that has to happen. There is an opportunity when kids are starting to offend to see them compelled to participate in some things. That is not to say that good psychologists and counsellors will not use the carrot and stick and some good skills to take three weeks or three months to get the kid to self-determine, but it is trying to get the kids to participate. They have made bad choices and ended up in the criminal justice system. I think it is a fallacy for us to believe that they are just going to turn over and consent to being part of programs. We are really trying to come up with some solutions in that area and we look forward to your advice.

**Ms Woodall:** I agree 100 per cent. What I will say is that, for a lot of our young people, the reason they are offending is because in their own homes they are feeling that they do not belong as there might be trauma there. They are feeling, 'Who am I? Where is my cultural identity? Where is my place of belonging?' We have just relocated to the Dreamtime Cultural Centre, so we have gone from office space to a nature base, and I am already seeing the difference in young people because they have a sense of belonging. They have a whole community there that they belong to. We are all a big family. Now that they have the sense of belonging, we go, 'Okay, we will walk together and you lead the way. We will walk next to you towards your goal, but you lead the way.' I think without that key sense of a place of belonging and connection, we cannot move onto anything following that.

**Mr KELLY:** Your organisation has been operating in this space for 30 years. I know that not all of you have been involved for 30 years, but would you say that juvenile offending has increased significantly over that 30 years? Has the nature of that offending changed? If it has changed or increased, what do you think is driving that?

**Ms Malone:** Wow, that is a big question. It definitely has changed; the nature of offending has changed. Previous to being the CEO of Darumbal, I was 18 years in Youth Justice in youth justice conferencing, restorative justice conferencing. When that first started out, the biggest call we had was bike helmets. When I left, we were looking at things like manslaughter, offences with vehicles—things like that. Yes, the offending has changed. What do I put it down to? I do not know. Their family life is not good, making stupid choices, drugs have to have a part to play in that—it is not one single thing. It will be a combination of things that changes what trajectory the kids go to, but it definitely has changed. Do I think it has increased? I think we have a small cohort, but they are doing a lot of work, and I will stand by that. I do not think we have blown out and have 30 million kids that are offending; I think it is just a small cohort. It is about valuing them and putting them on the right road.

**Mr KELLY:** Looking at your website, doing a bit of research prior to today, it seems like you have a whole range of different programs. Do you have data on what might be effective in terms of reducing recidivism or putting kids back on a good path?

**Ms Malone:** We would. I am involved in an international research project about the carcel interface, and they are talking about when it is that the kids hit education, youth justice and the health system, because they all marry up together. They have to work together to produce kids that understand what is going on, especially with our Aboriginal kids—and I speak Aboriginal because that is what I am. If their health is not right, their learning is not going to be right. If their learning is not right, they are going to go to other means to get what they need. This international research I think will be really helpful for us and provide us with a lot more data around what works more effectively.

In the two years I have been there, we have really had a big push towards cultural outcomes. We have some kids who have previously been on the books of Youth Justice and ourselves who are actually undertaking work with us now. I believe we have to show that we support the kids to put them in a good place. If we turn our backs on them, who else is going to give them the opportunity? I know that I have some pushback when I do things like that, and that is okay with me, but we have to be the ones to stand up and go, 'Yep, you are my youth. Come and work for us. We will give you a trial. If you do the right thing, happy days. If you don't, we sit down and we talk about it.'

**CHAIR:** Out of your client base, how many have been in detention and are cycling through? This is what we are hearing a lot about when you refer to the cohort, that they are not deterred by detention.

**Ms Malone:** No, they are not.

**CHAIR:** They are cycling through and reoffending. What proportion of the clients you are dealing with at the moment are basically Rockhampton youth?

**Ms Malone:** Probably about 50 per cent, I would say. We do a lot of work in the schools as well, but with the youth justice cohort I would say about 50 per cent. They do—they go to detention, they learn a lot more, they come back out and they come back to the same situation that put them in there. No work is done with the family. That is the key thing: you have to have the family on board. You can teach the kids all you like. They actually come out and are really enthused and really want to change their life. They have had education in there and they have had structure—they understand all this—but they go back to a place where nothing has changed. If we do not change that, we are wasting our time over here. We have to work in a wraparound process.

**CHAIR:** That is a process and it takes time with the family, but in the meantime they are reoffending and traumatising communities. How do we bridge that gap to when they leave detention? I have heard a lot of words including what works well, but we know what is happening is not working well because the volume, which is over 90 per cent, are reoffending. We have had a lot of suggestions in other regions, including that that transition out of detention would need to be education-based or training-based. It would have to have a residential component and it would have to be a minimum of a year because short-term programs do not work. What are your thoughts?

**Ms Malone:** We have to work with the family. I will refer to domestic violence. You cannot work with the perpetrator and not work with the victim. It is the same deal if you do not work with the family. We are doing all the good work with the young person. That is great, but they still have to go back to this environment, like I said before. Once they go into detention, we should be starting to work with the family: 'Okay, you are worried about little Johnny. How do we keep him out? What are some of the things we could do?' You have to build a relationship with that family to ask the really hard questions.

**CHAIR:** Again, that takes time, and even if you start while they are in detention—

**Ms Malone:** You probably need to start before that. Before they go to detention, they have come to the notice of somebody, haven't they?

**CHAIR:** Yes, so it has to start back when they first have an encounter with the police.

**Ms Malone:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Does that mean that everything that is occurring now in the youth justice space and all those health assessments and everything that seems to occur once they reach detention needs to be brought right back in that space where it first happens? We have heard a lot that it has to be brought forward to literally at birth or prior. However, to break this cycle at the moment, it needs to be brought into that space of that first connection with police; is that what we are looking at?



**Ms Malone:** Everybody speaks about early intervention. Early intervention has to start way back then, because that is early intervention. Early intervention for me is from birth. You have to start that early. When you move through it, you will find that there are other siblings. They cannot be left out of it because their hero is their older sibling. If we do not break that then, they just follow through. That has been proven.

**Ms Woodall:** To build onto that, Aunty, I had a couple of yarns with some of my young people around what they think works and what they think does not. I was talking about domestic violence and substance use. A lot of what she was saying was what it is like for a young person: they move through the system but no-one is caring; no-one is listening to their story. They are saying, 'We will refer you here. We will make you do this. Go to this appointment,' but it is not meaningful to the young person. They spoke about domestic violence and she said, 'Well, the way my parents go, they are like kid brains. They are like kids who never grew up.' When I thought about that, I was like, 'So, if your parents are getting into these arguments which you think are really kid-brain level, that is telling us that there is a lack of emotional regulation, a lack of healthy relationships, a lack of understanding because the parents did not get that early enough for themselves.'

**CHAIR:** We have run out of time. I want to thank you so much. We did place a question on notice regarding the numbers and statistics. Could you please have the response to the secretariat by Tuesday, 12 March? Also, a submission would be invaluable. We would appreciate that. That is due by Friday, 1 March. I would just like to check that there was no notification regarding the reopening of submissions. I think that was about six weeks ago. You were not aware of the call for submissions at all?

**Ms Malone:** I am not aware, but I could have missed it.

**CHAIR:** That is alright. It just helps us to get better systems. Thank you so much. I wish you all the very best for the year.

**Proceedings suspended from 11.58 am to 12.30 pm.**

**LORENZA, Dr Linda, Senior Lecturer, Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music, School of Education and the Arts, Central Queensland University**

**CHAIR:** Thank you for giving up your time. Would you like to make an opening statement before we ask you some questions?

**Ms Lorenza:** I would like to acknowledge and pay my respects to the elders of the Darumbal people who are here today, those who are not here today, and those past, present and emerging. I would also like to acknowledge that the public hearing is occurring in regional Queensland and that you have come here to Rockhampton today. I myself am, I guess you could say, an immigrant. I am originally from Sydney. I moved to Central Queensland for this work at Central Queensland University. My background is in the arts and education. One of my passions is using the arts to enable people to communicate, so I just put that out there as a platform.

We provided a submission from our recent research, the No Dramas research project, which was with young people here in the Rockhampton area. It is a research project that began with, and maintains, listening to young people. The young people who participated were from each of the youth support organisations I have seen represented here today: Carinity, Darumbal Youth Network, CQ Health Connect, Youth Connect and also particularly Our Space. You will hear from them later this afternoon.

The project nurtured all of the 68 young people who participated as youth researchers with us, the adult research academics, as kind of research experts facilitating that process. We employed a creative team of four actors and a videographer. All were in the young people age group. The actors and videographers were aged 18 to their mid 20s; the young people who participated were aged 14 to 20. Of the creative team, two of the actors were First Nations actors and we had a young videographer who was also a First Nations videographer. We worked with the creative team on issues of concern that had been raised through focus groups earlier last year with young people here in the region. The creative team then took workshop discussion groups, with groups of these young people looking at these issues of concern through improvised theatre activities. The idea was to learn from the young people what they wanted to know and how they wanted to find out that information.

As we know, we are living with a generation that is driven by social media, a generation that has a short attention span and a generation that is actually quite savvy on a device. Working with the young people, in the end the creative team developed 10 TikTok-length clips. The first round of clips were about 30 seconds long. When we brought those back and showed them to the young people, we found that the attention span was actually about seven seconds and then they flicked over to the next one. We have seven seconds to catch the attention of a young person and engage with them on whatever the topic is. The things the young people wanted to know about and wanted to develop these videos about were things such as: street checks by the police, vaping, alcohol, substance use and social pressure, bullying and cyberbullying. The TikToks that were developed by the actors were basically driven and directed by the 68 young people who participated in the project. They were very much about listening to the young people, finding out how they communicate, what are the trends, what are the styles of performance and video that interest them, and then how we can use those to communicate on these issues.

One of the key things the young people in the workshop discussion groups said was, 'We don't actually want to focus on whether what we're doing is legal or illegal. We want to know, particularly with substances, what that is doing to us physically, emotionally and socially.' Their social connections—and we have been hearing about connection today—are very important to them, their sense of belonging, their sense of identity.

The other thing we found during this research was, of course, looking at other people's research. We found there is some neuroscience research that claims the brain processes image and moving image up to about 60,000 times faster than it processes text. As an educator, I am very aware that we have many young people who have learning difficulties. They may be dyslexic, they may not even be able to read, but by using devices, short-form video and voice instruction to a device they can find information. We have brought these results back to the community and worked particularly with the lead of Central Queensland Health Youth Connect, who has established a real network amongst the different health and youth organisations to bring this idea of how we can communicate and create opportunities for young people to find information in the platforms they are using.

That is really where this project has come from. It was originally developed from a pilot that we ran in response to a request from the Darumbal Youth Network. We heard from Aunty Rose and her staff earlier. The elders from the Darumbal Community Youth Network contacted the law department at the university and said, 'Is there something you could do to help us with helping our young people

understand the processes of law—things such as police street checks, what happens if they go in for an interview, what happens if they're at the watch house?' A colleague in the law faculty and I looked at this. We brought law students and theatre students together to explore what it is in legalese and how the theatre students could improvise these, and then we provided these very rough, short videos back to the Darumbal youth network. They showed these to the young people, who found some of it quite amusing; for example, not showing the time delay between how long it takes for a police youth officer who is doing an interview to go and contact a guardian or a youth worker and then come back into the interview room. In the video the student just went out and then came back in, so they found that quite amusing. That created an opening for us to explore how we can use storytelling and improvised theatre to explore these concerns with young people, originally at Darumbal and now on a broader spectrum with more young people here in the community in Rockhampton. That is where the project has come from.

I think there are other things we need to consider that have been brought up, particularly by Auntie Rose and my Darumbal colleagues here today. There are a whole lot of things that go into the young person's story. We have heard about family from Friederike McCartney from CQ Health Youth Connect talking about health and the social cycle. There are health concerns and health behaviours that are affecting young people and contributing to the situations that we then find them in.

I have one other point and then I would be very happy to respond to whatever would you like to ask. Talking to my colleagues about this, it is not that as adults we are not listening—perhaps we are chasing our tails and trying to do what we think young people expect us to do. Really, what we need to do is ask them what they expect us to do or what we can do with them. That is really where we have come from so far in this particular research project.

I just noted down the seven priorities that are being considered. We are looking at: priority 2, early assessment and early intervention; priority 6, public confidence—young people are not confident in the youth justice system; and priority 4, engagement with positive programs earlier. That is something else we think would be invaluable.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thanks very much for your research. It was fascinating for me to have a look at that. Have you been able to test those themes and the videos created by the kids to see their efficacy for other messages? We hear a lot about plastic relationships that do not work in connecting with kids. I am fascinated that this might be a pathway or gateway. Where do you see the opportunities for your work?

**Dr Lorenza:** The videos are out there. We have them on a TikTok platform—we have them out through the platform of the young videographer who did them, so they had a massive reach through that—and we also have them out through a YouTube channel for people who might not be TikTok users. Certainly what we found from those is that there was a lot of immediate interest and on-sharing. Particularly the young people who participated really liked being able to see that something they had contributed to was on the screen. The other thing we found, though—and the young people were very clear about this—is that a TikTok video has a very short life span. The hashtags and the trends change very quickly. The style of the videos, although quite complex when we looked at the different layers in all the different styles of videos—there are a lot of layers there—is like fashion: it changes really quickly. It is difficult then to think, 'How can youth organisations, how can health organisations, contribute and provide information through these platforms when what is being provided has such a short life span?' Again, we have not tested this yet, but hopefully this is something we can work towards. We need to turn it around the other way and put to it the young people: 'This is the information we think you might want to know. Do you want to know it and how would you share it?'

**Ms BUSH:** I heard you say that you were working with the young people from Darumbal. Are you working as well with young people in detention? Is that the cohort you are working with?

**Dr Lorenza:** At the moment, no. The project has only been with young people through the youth organisations in the community. I have to say that I think it would be great to explore that and work with young people in detention. In my past work, when I was working with the Bell Shakespeare company down in Sydney, we did actually secure funding to put a program into the youth justice system in New South Wales. That has continued. That involves going in and doing a 10-week program with young people. You might find it quite surprising, but it really does validate the young people that someone wants to explore the story of a Shakespeare play with them. When they find characters who have had an experience like them but it was written 400 or 500 years ago, that validates the youth's experience.

**Ms BUSH:** I was going to get to New South Wales, because I know they do a lot of work in that space. Young people are using social media as a way to get recognition and to find place and belonging. I have explored that through all of our public hearings and I have erred on the side of, 'Should we as regulators have stronger take-down notices and actually be pulling this content down?' but I am interested in your view as to whether there is another way to work with young people to get them to use social media appropriately. I am interested in your view generally on the use of social media—the taking of footage, posting it: 'Here I am driving a BMW at 200 kays.' What can be done in that space?

**Dr Lorenza:** I cannot give you exact answer to that, but I have seen some of the sorts of social media posts that you are talking about. I will give an anecdote to the side of that. Perhaps we need to try to look at these things in a different way. When we were doing some of the initial workshop discussions with young people—it was actually my theatre students who were working with them—and they asked, 'If the policeman or the security guard stops you and asks for ID, what do you do?' they said, 'We run away.' They asked, 'Why do you run away?' and the reaction of many of them was not what we would think—fear. For some of them, it was actually kind of the thrill of the chase. I think we need to try to look at that differently.

I cannot answer the question about how we negotiate the young person's use of social media, but I think maybe it is looking at why. What is that motivation for it? I think from some of the things that we have already heard from other organisations this morning, it is about early intervention; it is about place; it is about somewhere to belong. There is one other thing I would like to throw in from some work that has been happening in Mackay, which is where I am based. There was a 1,000 Voices conversation set up by a youth worker in the council. Adults in the community were saying, 'Young people are out on the street at night. We don't like it. We think this is a danger.' Then when they asked the young people they said, 'We don't have anywhere to go or belong that is not school, casual work or home and there is no public transport.' Again, we need to listen.

**Mrs GERBER:** The terms of reference for this committee are to look at how we might better support victims and to look at the Youth Justice Act and whether or not there are any changes that need to happen there to prevent youth crime or stem the youth crime crisis that is currently ripping through Queensland. In relation to your project, the community-led research project called No Dramas, you develop TikToks that help to educate young people how to engage with the youth justice system and police.

**Dr Lorenza:** Initially it is with the police in terms of that last round of the short videos. The initial videos we did—that was the pilot project with Darumbal—were looking at, 'What do you do if a police person stops you on the street? What are your responsibilities?' but also, 'What can you ask?' That is something we carried through into that TikTok. The other videos that were for Darumbal were, 'What happens if you are brought in for questioning?' and very much looking at the message to the young person of, 'You can ask for a guardian or a youth worker to be with you during that process.' Then we also looked at what happens when you go to court. They were very introductory videos but trying to open up that conversation by using young people in the videos and that way of just opening up.

**Mrs GERBER:** Was the target audience kids who have not come into contact with the justice system before or were you dealing with serious repeat offenders?

**Dr Lorenza:** The first project was particularly for the Darumbal youth network, so the range of young people that Darumbal work with, which, as you have heard from Aunty Rose, is a range of young people who have engaged with the youth justice system and some who have not.

**Mrs GERBER:** So that they understand their rights?

**Dr Lorenza:** Yes. It is very much about understanding their rights but also trying to help them understand the process.

**Mr O'ROURKE:** Thank you for being here this afternoon. My question is with regard to the importance of keeping kids engaged in the education system. I would just like to hear what you think are some of the opportunities we could tap into to make sure we keep our kids at school and learning.

**Dr Lorenza:** As we all know, in education as it stands right around the country we are short on teachers, and post COVID we have a lot of young people with developing needs and concerns, so I cannot answer that. We are all working towards hopefully finding a way to rebuild and resolidify that, but I think, again, looking at it differently, there are ways, particularly in Queensland, for young people to do additional or alternative programs That may be through the TAFE system, the vocational

education system. Even at the university we have Start Uni Now units, so units in our undergraduate degrees that we provide for school students to undertake to try to attract their attention and give them a way into something that is of interest to them.

Another thing that perhaps we struggle with now is that we may all have grown up in a society where you followed a career path and generally that was for life. You might change jobs a few times, but you stayed within one broad discipline. I think with young people now that is not necessarily the case. There is a lot of unsureness about: 'Where do I go? Where do I belong?' I have been looking at using the options we have through the vocational education short courses that we have through CQU. Can we use some of our hospitality courses or some of our mechanics, engineering or trades courses? Can we find a way to engage young people through those? Young people learn in different ways. We have kinesthetic—very practical, physical—learners; we have visual learners; and we have aural learners. Not all young people learn the same way and not all engage the same way, so we have to find a way to engage them differently.

**CHAIR:** We have heard of these repeat offenders who are cycling through. A huge percentage have cognitive impairment, which could include FASD and comorbidities. There has obviously been an escalation in the speed at which they offend versus prior to COVID. Is there any correlation between that speeding up and the introduction of TikTok—the shorter span and those cognitive impairments? Have there been any studies done into how we address that? We have become a tick and flick society anyway—frantically scrolling, which, from my understanding, causes dopamine to be released and you are getting a bit of a high. Has there been any work done on the correlation between social media—Instagram, TikTok and all of these channels that are being used—and what is occurring?

**Dr Lorenza:** In terms of the health conditions?

**CHAIR:** In terms of the velocity. We have heard from other witnesses who believe that things like video games are feeding that dopamine and are part of the reason for the increase in the speed at which the crimes are occurring.

**Dr Lorenza:** I could not speak directly to that. I am aware that there has been some particular research done with FASD and what is happening with young people in terms of incarceration. That has come out of Western Australia. I could take that on notice and provide that reference to you if that would be of use. I cannot say specifically that that looks at the connection between social media, video gaming and so forth, but I do think the work that those researchers are doing is incredibly valuable.

**CHAIR:** With the videos you are doing you are embedding messages. Did you look at how to embed messages about the impact on others? When we were younger it was about the harm you are doing to others when you do certain things. Has there been any of that embedded into the messaging you are sending out to this particular cohort?

**Dr Lorenza:** I think I could say that there is. When I look back at my comment about the young people saying to us, 'We want to know what these things are doing to us socially, emotionally and physically,' what we found then was that they were saying, 'We look out for our friends. We look out for each other.' If we can get the messaging to them through things like these short-form videos—'Vaping might contain these chemicals; it can do these things to you'—they will share that information.

**CHAIR:** I meant in terms of the impact of their crimes on the victims. If we are starting to get that there are ways to reach them through Instagram and TikTok, is any of that messaging being embedded so that they understand who they are impacting and that it is more reality, instead of it being removed and almost a by-product?

**Dr Lorenza:** Our study initially has not gone that far because it is about the gradual development. I think there would be a way to look at embedding that, but, again, it is about, 'Can we get the young people to recognise that and then share that if something happens to them or someone they know?' so it is that familiarity, I think, rather than generally.

**Mr McDONALD:** I do not know if your work had anything to do with the psychology and consequences for action. If kids do not want to do something, they are obviously resisting it. Did your work do anything in that space? We really want to see kids change early, because that is why we have the crisis.

**Dr Lorenza:** This is the first year we have run this so, to be honest, no, we did not get that far. Certainly if we look back at things that they said, comments that they made, we can see where they have said, 'I'm not engaging with that.'

**Ms BUSH:** Linda, you mentioned something before about the Mackay program. That got me a little bit interested about the work of community and the way we perceive young people sometimes. I am curious about the young people you work with. How much of an issue was it not having a space to go and hang out in a pro social way? Secondly, for those who might want to engage online, how big of an issue was access to technology for those young people? Did they have access to technology at home? Did they have wi-fi? How much of a barrier was digital access for them?

**Dr Lorenza:** We did not take a measure of the digital access, if I look at that question initially. It really was again observational and anecdotal and that links into the idea of place. One thing that we particularly found with the project here was that when we went to OurSpace, the youth space that you will hear about from Jess shortly, that was where we saw the most connection and the most interaction of the young people. There was device sharing, wi-fi access and so on there. It was a safe space that belonged to them. I think that is something that is really worth looking at. It is about having somewhere to go, somewhere to belong and somewhere to be safe.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much for giving your time. We really appreciate it. All the very best and I think you did take a question on notice?

**Dr Lorenza:** The reference if you want me to find that for you.

**CHAIR:** Yes, please. It is due 12 March. Thank you so much. All the best for the year. I now welcome our next witnesses.

**CONWAY, Ms Jessie, Service Manager, OurSpace**

**HARLAND, Ms Lyn, Principal, Carinity Education Rockhampton**

**CHAIR:** Good afternoon to you both and thank you for joining us. Would you like to make an opening statement before the committee asks some questions?

**Ms Conway:** Thank you very much to the committee for coming and actually hearing the issues in our local community. I would also like to acknowledge the land we meet on today, the land of the Darumbal people, and their elders past, present and also emerging.

We will give you a bit of a background around OurSpace. It is a relatively new project. It has only been in formation in its current form for the last three years. We opened in May 2021. It was a group of service providers who came together and actually identified that there was a need for a safe space for youth to access. There were massive youth crime issues at the Stockland Shopping Centre. It was a hub. From that, a working group determined that they needed to get some funding to actually open a safe space for these kids to access and avoid them doing those crimes they had been doing—a lot of shoplifting, a lot of antisocial behaviour, running around and meeting in large groups, which also really affected the shoppers coming in. The community people still say today that they avoid coming shopping on a Thursday night because they are scared of the youth crime, which is not so much of an issue anymore. However, we do see a lot of those younger kids coming in that are just starting to engage in that criminal activity. They are starting to think about their behaviours.

That is what our service really is there to do. We are not there to recreate the wheel because, as we have already heard, there are a lot of other service providers within the Rockhampton region that run programs for youth in different capacities, especially the Darumbal Community Youth Service connecting them with culture, the CQID, the Bike Shed and many others that we work with. What we are doing is creating that central hub for those youth who feel comfortable actually accessing the shopping centre, because that is their community hub—they can get away from home; they can come into air-conditioned comfort—and we can provide them with information, referrals and all the things they need to be safe and to make the better decisions.

Originally, the project was funded by CBCAC, which is the Community Based Crime Action Committee. They originally started with a tiny amount of funding just to employ me to start the project. Since then Stockland Shopping Centre has come on board with about \$100,000 a year and they are looking at continuing their support. We have also got some other local community funds helping us.

One of the things we have really been struggling with is that ongoing funding—the ability to actually apply for funding that is sustainable. One of the key outcomes of the spaces is that we have provided these kids with staff who are consistent. They do not change. Those relationships have been built. It has taken about two years to build that trust and rapport with the young people so that they feel comfortable coming to us and saying, 'Look I stole this,' or, 'Look, I have a problem with vaping,' 'Mum and dad are fighting at home.' We have a lot of those conversations. My youth worker is back there and he is one of those people at the forefront having those conversations with young people. As Linda said before, they just want to be heard and to be able to communicate their needs. We do not force them to do anything. We find it is better to sit back and take that approach where we create a space that is welcoming to them so they want to come and discuss their issues. They are happy to open up. It has taken a long time to get to that point.

Currently, the funding is a difficult one for us and that has really reduced our capacity to service the kids we need to. In December we had 1,045 visitations in a month, and that was our biggest month. This month we are heading up to about 850 to 900 kids. We are currently staffed by two people. That is me and my youth worker. We are only able to be open—I am employed for 30 hours, he is employed for roughly 20 hours and we are just doing the best we can with what we have. We do not have enough space. The kids are wanting to access more such as a kitchen. We do not have anything like that. We are just working off a tiny shoestring budget.

One of the things that we have found very difficult to do is to engage with larger organisations around the region who are in that youth space that are also supposed to be delivering these programs. We are honestly just not seeing some of the outcomes that we were hoping to see. We have engaged numerous times with large organisations around Rockhampton. It is very hard to get a lot of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to come and sit at the table. That is something; we really want them to be involved with us because we are servicing 44 per cent Indigenous youth who are coming through our doors. Out of those thousand kids, there are 400 or 500 kids who are Indigenous, and our numbers are conservative.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

The questions we really want to raise with the committee are as follows. Where is that existing funding going? What are the outcomes of those programs? How many children are they servicing? It is just about knowing what programs are available. We really want to engage with them because we are an information point for those kids. We want to be able to send kids to their services, but we find that sometimes it is quite difficult to get them in, especially the managers, to discuss what they are doing and to link with us.

There is another thing I want to briefly mention before I pass over to Lyn. She is amazing. Lyn is from Carinity Education, which is a flexible learning school. We worked a lot in the past with an amazing organisation called CQ Youth Connect. They provided a lot of health prevention, contraceptive and sexual health, anti-smoking and anti-vaping information in a practical way to kids. They could touch things, feel them and ask questions. They would go out and visit all those tiny communities and schools. Their funding has been pulled without any consultation. I might hand over to Lyn if that is all right.

**Ms Harland:** I will share with you part of a letter that was sent to our local members that I have permission to share. Then I will be happy to speak or answer questions about a lot of other things.

**CHAIR:** I see that you have not put in a submission either.

**Ms Harland:** Yes, we can put things forward.

**CHAIR:** Are you happy to table it and also put in a submission?

**Ms Harland:** Yes. I will not read the whole of this out. It states—

We're writing to you as members of the community in Central Queensland and active participants in community services and community change in our region. Some of us have done paid and voluntary work for Queensland Health including CQ Youth Connect where colleagues and, in some cases, friends—

you would have heard Friederike McCartney's name mentioned before—

the clinical nurse consultant who established CQ Youth Connect was running for over 10 years. None of us are currently employed by Queensland Health. Some of the people in our community have been told that CQ Health has been closed down. This has been a valuable service to our community for 10 years. It has strong connections with the community organisations, volunteer organisations, health practitioners and provides inside and outside Queensland Health including an extensive referral network. The questions we were wanting answered were: why has nothing been announced about the closing of CQ Youth Connect? Why are they closing down the existing program that is providing clinical, educational services addressing youth mental health, alcohol and other drug use, sexual and reproductive health to young people in the community? Why aren't they modifying the existing well-regarded service? Who has been consulted in making this decision and why have the community and consumers not been consulted? Is CQ Health really willing to abandon a vibrant, engaged network of youth, health and social service providers in the community? What is going to replace this service with the breadth of young people in the community that need it? Why is CQ Youth Connect being shut down before a replacement is set up within the community? What is going to be done in the interim for these young people?

This happened just prior to Christmas, just so you are aware. It goes on—

What's being done to acknowledge the huge contribution that has been made by CQ Youth Connect in the lives of young people?

Things we mentioned before like the fetal alcohol syndrome program were set up through the CQ Youth Connect. It goes on—

Closing down without explanation the much anticipated and hardly given time to succeed CQ Health youth reference group.

This youth reference group was a brilliant collaboration of young minds that took over two years to set up, and it has just been disbanded. They have not been told what is going on. It goes on—

The annual CQ Youth Interagency Health Forum is this year in its 10th year and for the first time the community committee decided to ask Every Child CQ host the event instead of being hosted by CQ Health.

I will let what is written there come through to you in writing. It goes on—

Two identified Indigenous youth engagement office positions have been vacated this year and were not refilled. We weren't told why. The car for the use of the organisation for CQ Health for the youth and the program have been removed. The program cofounded the FASD CQ Alliance and tirelessly advocates for the awareness and education of clinical services to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.

There is so much here that CQ Youth Connect had done. To see this program just removed with no community consultation whatsoever leaves us in disbelief.

**Ms Conway:** We are still waiting for a response from management of CQ Health. We still have not heard back from the key people who have made that decision.

**Ms Harland:** The Community Based Crime Action Committee have invited them to the last couple of meetings but they were unavailable. We thought they could address us as a community, which has not occurred. Aside from that, I am the principal of Carinity Education here in Rockhampton.



Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

We are what is known as a special assistance school not to be confused with a special school. Special assistance schools were originally set up to work with the population of young people who did not fit mainstream schooling for any reason.

Generally, the cohort of young people we have are those who have been on long suspensions or exclusions from their schools. We work with young people who are repeat offenders or on the well-known lists. We put wellbeing above curriculum. We have 100 per cent success rate with our QCE. That is not to say we do not have curriculum; we run ACARA curriculum the same as every other school. We just provide that sense of belonging you have heard everybody talk about first, that wraparound of needs for our young people. We provide breakfast, lunch, morning and afternoon tea. We bus the students to and from our school.

We have 138 young people across two schools. We deliberately try to ensure our classrooms are a little bit smaller. When I say that, there are supposed to be around 16 kids in a class. We have a couple of classes at the moment due to our community need that have about 30 students. Each of our classrooms has a teacher and a youth worker. We work with the young people to support their needs including what is going on for them at home. Many of the things you have heard today—has anyone watched that great Netflix series *Boy Swallows Universe*? Carinity helped film that, by the way. That is the lives of our young people. It is not just our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who have those lives. I will leave it there.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you. I really appreciate hearing that story. It is the first I have heard that and I would be really interested to understand why that funding was cut. To set up that CBCAC takes time and effort and the relationships between each of the agencies is critical. Do you know why?

**Ms Harland:** As to the CQ Youth Connect, as Jess says, we are still waiting for answers.

**Ms Conway:** A new manager has come in and everybody on CBCAC has put together that to ask for that response and we are still waiting to hear back.

**Mr McDONALD:** Thank you for your engagement with young people. What is your sense of why crime has increased through Central Queensland?

**Ms Harland:** Chair, earlier you asked, 'When will young people understand what they have done and have empathy towards the victims of their crimes?'

**CHAIR:** Yes. That was in relation to social media.

**Ms Harland:** Educational neuroscience will explain to you that the first emotion we all have as a human is shame. We learnt that we are shameful. From that shame, we then have to learn that that is on our journey to empathy. If you come into a normal household and you do something that is shameful, mum, dad or whomever is your parent or carer will envelop you in that. They will say, 'Oh, it is okay sweetie. We will do it this way or we will do it that way. That is okay.' We are talking about young people who have a reactive attachment. They have all of those comorbidity factors you are talking about. They have not formed appropriate levels of shame to get to feeling empathy, okay?

There is an organisation in Toowoomba—Mercy Community Services—that I used to work for. We had a program that ran for six young children under the age of seven who were diagnosed sociopaths aged six. That program cost \$1 million a year to run and was pulled after the first two years even though it was successful, but we are talking about those six people turning into your top-of-the-list crime offenders, your serial killers. But they would not put the money back here in the early intervention; they would instead spend it when they end up in the system. Our young people do not have that ability to feel shame or remorseful in some cases, because they have not learnt that. That is where our school works—when a young person comes to us.

Someone asked, 'When does it start? How do we help?' Can you guys answer me? What is the purpose of a school suspension? Do you send a young person home on a Monday for seven days who cannot read and expect them to know how to read by the next Monday? We do not. Why are you sending home a young person who does not know how to behave and respond and expecting them to know how to when they come back on Monday? What is happening during this time of suspension? The families are not getting any support. The kids are at home on PlayStation or Xbox. There is no support given to the family at that time.

If you want to look at changing something such as abolishing suspension, we do not have it at our school. If you are going to have a suspension, put in the supports for the family and the young person in learning the appropriate behaviour. What are your responses? We work with kids. I will keep it simple—the triune brain, three parts. If they are working in a reactive space—if they are having a trauma response—they have no idea what they have just done. If they are working in the middle part of the brain, there is capacity for them to understand if you help support them to do that. The

cognitive thinkers—the sociopathic brain that is constantly thinking and premeditating—is very few and far between with what we are talking about with our young people offending. They either do not have capacity for the empathy because no-one has shown them how, or they have no sense of belonging.

If you belong to a community, you do not steal in that community. If you feel as though you are part of something, you are part of something. That is why you need to include the kids in what we are doing. I asked all of my kids, 'What do you want me to tell them today?' They said, 'Just invite them here.' Everyone behind me and all of you guys here are welcome at any of our Carinity schools at any time. Come and talk to them.

**Ms BUSH:** Like always, I have a number of questions. I will ask a couple and see how we go. Jessie, you are doing some fantastic work. I am aware of other programs—and it is great to see—in some of these shopping centres where there are a couple of models such as that, which is fantastic. It sounds as though you are engaging with young people who are a little bit lower down the offending in that kind of preliminary stage who are starting to think about doing some things. Would that be correct?

**Ms Conway:** Yes, absolutely. We are at that early intervention and are finding that we need to start earlier than just high school age. We need to start with eight, nine and 10-year-olds.

**Ms BUSH:** You mentioned struggling with funding. I am curious in that because that has come up as a theme. Is it because you do not have charitable status? Is it that the projects are not working? What is it for you?

**Ms Conway:** Yes, there are a few reasons, I suppose. It is hard to get any feedback from youth justice when you put in applications. We applied for a Community Partnership Innovation Grant which would have been very amazing to get; however, it is very hard to get any feedback from them. Nothing from that fund was funded in Rockhampton. One project was funded in Woorabinda. At the moment, we do not have charitable status. We are still sorting out our structure. That can be an issue. A lot of the community businesses are willing to put their support behind us. It is a matter of having flexible funding that is quick and responsive rather than having ones that take a year to actually happen, because we are doing work on the ground right now.

**Ms BUSH:** I thought that maybe the Chamber of Commerce or something similar would be a good partnership, but it might be working with an NGO or someone to join up so that you can make an application.

**Ms Conway:** As you heard before, currently we are auspiced by Every Child CQU Inc. We have that in place. They do not have charitable status, but we have the ability to apply for government funding and we do need reliable, sustainable funding. I am just a contractor and my youth worker is also a contractor. We need that sustainability going forward to make this a successful project in the end. So far, the statistics are looking really good. We want to keep this going.

**Mr PURDIE:** Thank you, Lyn, and thanks for your explanation before about shame and belonging; I appreciate that. As a former policeman but also as a father of two preteen girls—

**Ms Harland:** I am sorry.

**Mr PURDIE:** Yes, thank you! I have a long road in front of me the next couple of years. What about boundaries and consequences for actions and deterrents, because in my experience kids between the ages of 10 and 16 will push all those boundaries to continue to find how far they can push them until it breaks. What do you think about clear consequences and deterrents around these younger people?

**Ms Harland:** I really appreciate the question. People see what we do at our school as a soft form of justice because we do not do suspension. We make the young person understand and own up to their behaviour. For example, if something has occurred and we need to be having a conversation with them, we actually talk them through what was going on for them. We use a form of training called therapeutic crisis intervention, TCI. Part of TCI is a life space interview. It is how you engage with the young person. When you are using that, you help the young person understand what was going on for them in their body at the time of the occurrence of whatever offence it was. You help them relate that to the emotion, what was physically happening and what was emotionally happening to them. Then they can sort of start to reflect on what they did and how that came across. Then we talk them through that and we talk through the consequences. In a situation, 'What do you think should happen for here?' We make them own whatever—whether it was a decision they were thinking of at the time or whether it was a trauma response. We help them get back to, 'What was the cause of that?' If you find out the antecedent for what has caused the behaviour, you can work back here and you can fix that.

If a young person comes to me, they will generally say to me, 'Oh, I am really sorry, miss, I won't do that again.' It will be like, 'You know what? You probably will do it again. However, what we want to see is a bit of improvement in this way. When you say you are sorry, sorry does not mean anything if we are not going to see a change in your behaviour. What I am looking for is not your apology but your ability to change your behaviour, and guess what? Here at this school we all support you to do that. Who is your go-to person? Who is your youth worker? Is it here on my couch? Is it a teacher?' When we enrol the young people who come to our school—we talked before about how do we bring the family along—we enrol the family as well. That family must be accepting of supports if we deem it so necessary, because their young person's need is at the centre of everything we do. If that means that that family needs help at home, we will do a referral to Family and Child Connect. We will get support services in place. We focus. The consequences are there. More so, our young people not only graduate at the end of year 12. If you look at their life circumstance, we are talking about transition pathways. 'When you are doing year 12, wouldn't it have been great to have a house, somewhere to live and some food to eat?' Our kids, even if they are in child safety, are being moved from placement to placement in their final year when they should be just focusing on their studies. They are being moved. They do not even know where they are going to the next day.

I will have garbage bags turning up at the front of the school with kids' clothes in them being moved to somewhere else. I have kids come to school who are off tap for the day and their youth worker will have said, 'I won't see you tonight because you are moving to another place.' 'Let's just drop them at school.' They will know someone is going through their personal belongings at home to move them and they do not know where they are going. How do they concentrate on a day like that? We do have consequences, but it is about working through them with the young person because, if we are just sending them out on a suspension, who is working with them to help them understand what they did wrong? A re-entry looks very different. If we have a young person out for mental health—mental health for us is really big—all of our staff are trained in mental health first aid. All of our young people are undertaking the team mental health first aid in terms 2 and 3 this year. We are offering it to families for free on the weekends to do their mental health first aid certification.

If these young people are in a state system, when they go back for re-entry after suspension—if anyone behind me has actually been in one of these with your kids—you are sat down at a table, told what your child did wrong, what is the expectation of the school and what will happen next if they have done it. They are then told to go to class. The parent does not speak, 'Off you go.' If we have a child who has been out for mental health and they come back we go, 'Oh, what did we miss as a school? What was going on there for you? What do you need?' After that re-entry, that young person is then told, 'Okay, you need to go home and think about all of that. We will see you tomorrow for a fresh start.' There are so many little simple things we can do to fix a system that is already broken. It really is not rocket science.

**Mr O'ROURKE:** Thank you for being here this afternoon. The committee has heard that it is often difficult to engage young people in the programs that are actually designed to help them. From your experience, do you have any suggestions about how to better engage with these people to actually get them into the programs to help them?

**Ms Conway:** One of the key aspects of OurSpace was to try and engage with those kids, because they will not engage with other services. They will not walk through the door of headspace because that is so intimidating. At OurSpace, we are making sure we make the physical space—I am not sure whether anybody has been past; you probably heard us—for those young kids. It has lights. It is like a nightclub for kids. Really, the kids feel comfortable. They come in and then they can therefore start talking to other services that come and visit. Every fortnight we have Lives Lived Well come and have somebody at the space whom they can talk to. We have had four kids already sign up to quit vaping. That was just last week. In creating those relationships with other service providers, they come into the service and meet the kids where they are comfortable. That is what seems to be working rather than forcing the kids—you cannot force them—to go out and visit another service. It is about having a relationship already. Between myself and my youth worker, Chris, we have those relationships with kids. We can talk to them and say, 'Look, Clare from Lives Lived Well is amazing. You need to go and chat with her.' They trust you that you actually have their best interests at heart. Then they can come back and give you feedback. It is about having that trust between the kids already and ensuring we continue to do that, because we need to keep that consistency going.

**Ms Harland:** The kids are not safe at home. They have nowhere to go if it is not there. There is nowhere for them. Barry, are you thinking about a community position within the Rockhampton council? There has never been one. Why isn't there one?

**CHAIR:** We are just about out of time, but the member for Cooper wants to ask a quick question. Then we will have to write you a long letter of questions.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you, Chair; I owe you. I have a few questions, but I am only going to ask one. Lyn, something you said struck my attention. I love Rockhampton. Obviously Barry is a super fan, of course. I have been here a number of times—and the people are beautiful—but every community has its end point and its point of feeling frustrated with what is going on. You mentioned the importance of young people feeling like they belong in the community and breaking this cycle if they have to feel like they belong here more than they do in detention. What is that piece that needs to happen in community?

**Ms Harland:** A youth and community coordinator for council would be a start.

**Ms BUSH:** What would that role look like?

**Ms Harland:** Down in the Lockyer Valley where I used to work as a multicultural policy officer, we had an amazing youth group. It was just about doing things for youth in the region and being that key connector that can coordinate through the voices of the community, and not just the youth but also families that are looking for things for their young people to do. It is that piece that connects everybody together—the person that drives those other smaller groups. We have a lot of different community organisations that need assistance with putting in funding applications for youth funding and things like that. Really, the position we had down there was all about that.

**Ms BUSH:** Do they advocate back out into community to myth bust things that might be rumours that are not true about young people's behaviours?

**Ms Harland:** Yes and we have talked at CBCAC quite a lot about getting out that narrative, that you see all of the bad things come up in the newspapers and we have talked about those great things. At school we have the Carinity Crew lawn care. It is a free lawn care business for age pensioners in the region. That is our youth getting a certificate in volunteering by going out and giving back to the community. All schools should be able to do something like that.

**CHAIR:** Jessie and Lyn, thank you both for your time. Because we do have so many questions, I am hoping that you will put in a submission and include in it the gaps. Across Queensland we have heard that programs and services are not available after hours because they all finish at four or five on a Friday. Who would be in a position to be the facilitator? We have constantly heard that initiatives and programs are far too short and that they need to have longevity and the mapping of those youth. It is one thing to say, yes, that program has been successful but if you do not know what is happening one year or two years afterwards with that youth then how can you quantify it? In your submission, could you highlight those items that we have heard about previously where there are gaps?

**Ms Conway:** Absolutely. Thank you so much for letting us talk today.

**Ms Harland:** Yes, thank you for the opportunity.

**CHAIR:** We wish you all the very best for the remainder of the year. Will you send that document through, at the same time, to the secretariat?

**Ms Conway:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much. We will now move on to the session for those who have registered to come and share briefly their experience. I would remind everyone about parliament's rules because I did not get to do it when our program went a bit haywire earlier, regarding making commentary that relates to criminal cases currently before the courts. That is so important to protect the victims and make sure that there is an outcome that the community expects. This includes comments that might identify vulnerable children. That includes children who are subject to the Child Protection Act 1999 and the Youth Justice Act. The Legislative Assembly and its committees recognise that matters awaiting or under adjudication in all courts exercising a criminal jurisdiction should not be referred to from the moment that a charge is made against a person until the matter is resolved in the courts. That is just a reminder.

We are really keen to hear from members of the community. I cannot stress enough the importance of getting submissions in. I know I have said that a lot today, but my concern is that, because we have such a short time, when you hop up to share your stories you may miss some really relevant parts and we are trying to get that information to identify what can be done better and how.

**WURTH, Ms Sue, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Sue, while we are not going to put you on the spot and ask questions, would you have any problem with us sending you an email to ask you questions?

**Ms Wurth:** I would encourage it. My details and phone number are there and a junk email is available. I would encourage each and every one of you.

**CHAIR:** Please share your experience.

**Ms Wurth:** I am a motor dealer. I have a lot to do with apprentices and young people, although obviously some older but many young people. I have probably put through or attempted to put through approximately 30 apprentices over the years. I have been in business for 32 years. I grew up in the Rocktonia area. I met an 11-year-old on the street in the late-eighties. Obviously I will not say his name. He had a brother. I was going home from the nightclubs in a group and there was a group of them. He was 11 and he had been out all night. It was probably two or three o'clock in the morning, possibly later—maybe four o'clock in the morning. He had been out all night on the streets. I am just giving you some background here.

What we witnessed in the late-eighties, history repeats. I tried to bring it to the politician's notice about 10 or maybe more years ago. Nobody wanted to do a thing. Nobody wanted to discuss it. It was thrown under a blanket. Here we are: 2024.

Carinity does a great job. I would like to see more of that type of environment where they go in a loving area and somebody pays them individual attention.

I could say a lot about police resources and lack of use in useful areas, misappropriation. Actually, going back to that 11-year-old, that same person was later described by somebody in the working field as their worst criminal. He was 11, on the street and it could have been prevented. They did not live a full life. Their ambition a few years after they were 11 was to spend more jail time than their father who was currently in jail. That was their life goal. To be described as the worst and most dangerous criminal somebody has ever worked with is not a title you want.

In April last year, like most times, there was a lot of police presence on the roads, taking a lot of licences in the same week that six to 20 cars were stolen in Rockhampton every night. That does not discriminate where you live. There have been numerous. Whether you are a doctor, whether you are a worker, it does not matter. Somebody invades your home, whether it is with a knife or without. There is far too much of it and it needs to stop.

On 31 October last year, my business was ramraided for a second time. The first time they did not get in. This time they did and they did it for fun. Rockhampton could have had a mega fire that night, one that would have destroyed millions of dollars worth of stock and one that you would have sat back and grabbed your popcorn. How close they were to it they will never know but they could have. They moved a 900-kilo crate five feet in. They destroyed one of the old-school roller doors, which is probably 20 times thicker than what you close each night at your house. They shunted a 1.8 tonne—which probably is about 2.8 tonne—forklift into a three tonne and it moved at least a foot. I am not sure if the three tonne moved an inch. They hit hard and they hit for fun—just for fun. They did not steal. They did not take the battery dual. They did not take the tool chest. They did it for fun. They did it in a stolen vehicle and not one charge has been laid for the crime. There was about \$20,000 worth of damage and not one. They have been charged apparently with misuse of a motor vehicle and charged for other crimes, but not that crime. Why? I obviously do not expect anyone here to appreciate it.

It took us half a day to open our workshop. We got abused by customers. I do not know why but they think it is possible to unroll a damaged roller door. This is the sort of thing that is going on. That person or one of the people who is suspected—99.9 per cent chance—of being involved was out on a two-year jail sentence that he served four months for. If the magistrate and the court system had kept to their word of two years then he would not have done my job and Rockhampton would not have been at risk of a massive fire. Lithium batteries go up.

Four months and apparently he was on a two-year jail term. It took him a couple of weeks and he has done our damage. Apparently, according to the newspaper, which is public knowledge, he has a 12-month jail term to serve on top of his two years, with parole eligibility immediately. How does that happen? They do it for fun: a stolen vehicle, destroying businesses.

We are short staffed. I am currently running on a quarter of the staff level that we need. I do not think anybody appreciates a quarter of the staff level. We are running on empty.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

They cannot charge somebody because they cannot see exactly who was at the wheel at the time of impact. A 900-kilo crate and a 1.8 tonne, which weighs about 2.8 tonnes; five foot that way and one foot that way, to a sudden stop. You are going to have injuries, aren't you? So who presented to the hospital with steering wheel impact marks to their chest? They must have been hurt. Good luck, I say. Steering wheel impact to the chest and they cannot be charged. It is pretty damn obvious who was behind the wheel.

That is my little bit of experience. As I say, my experience goes a long way back to the eighties. This is history repeating. It is a very broad spectrum. It is obviously very deep. Carinity does a great job and I think there is probably just the scraping of the top. If they cannot respect society then they need to be taken out of society and not put into a jail first up where they can learn the trade, have three meals a day or five meals a day, have free gymnasium, which everybody else works their rear ends off to go to. They are safe in jail. They have everything provided for them in jail and they make friends in jail. It is delusional. It is completely removed from society and normality where people are going to work and earning a living, under extraordinarily hard conditions at the moment where you cannot get staff and those who do come to work quite often are sick or cannot do a full day's work.

This has been going on for a long time. As I say, it was just to rub salt in the wounds when back in April we watched the police presence at Yeppoon and Byfield when there were six to 20 cars getting stolen every night of the week in that same week. It was an insult to intelligence.

I would have loved to have actually come here today and just sat here and twiddled my thumbs for five minutes, because that is what it feels like from society's point of view—that literally nobody is doing anything. There is obviously something in the background which allows that many people to be roaming the streets with knives, stealing people's keys, stealing their cars and destroying the public property of people who work hard. What is the magistrate's train of thought to let him out? This is one—and he is not alone—but what is the magistrate doing? What is the law doing? Very little. It is like they are working against the public. That is pretty much what I would like to say because there is a lot more time and I do encourage you to pull up a chair. I am very tired, so I am probably going around in circles and not making a lot of sense. There are a lot of things that I would have loved to say but not here today.

**CHAIR:** Sue, we all really appreciate it. If there are things that you do not want to say, please put it in writing if you can, even one page of dot points.

**Ms Wurth:** I can do that.

**CHAIR:** We would really appreciate that. Do you know where to get the secretariat's address? It is on the committee website or just catch us when we finish and we will give you that address.

**Ms Wurth:** I am going back to work. I have three people there out of 12.

**CHAIR:** We will send the link through to you. Thank you, Sue.

**Ms Wurth:** Thank you.

**BOND, Mr David, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome, David. Please share with us. You would have heard what I have already said about please get in a submission and all of that.

**Mr Bond:** Yes, that is correct. There has been a lot of conversation today. There certainly has been. I have learnt a lot just by being here myself, but I am not really here for me. In my engagement with the community as of late, people definitely have had enough. They are looking for change and the issue that I see is that if change is not enacted soon it is going to boil over. We have already had incidences in the past where there have been potential lynch mobs and all of this kind of thing, so that needs to be prevented in a short time frame I believe.

I have had numerous people come to me over the last little while saying they have had to upgrade their locks, their security, they do not feel safe in their homes anymore. I have done it myself because, even at my personal address, we have had people going from door to door checking doors and that type of thing. You catch them on the cameras, you give the information to the police and they know who these people are, but they cannot do anything. Why? Why can't they do anything? There must be an answer. We need some resolution, that is for sure. Again, this is not really about me; this is just what people have come to me and said who might not come here and actually voice their opinion. Other than that, that is pretty much all I have to say.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, David. If you are talking to anyone else, can you please encourage them to just—

**Mr Bond:** Yes, definitely.

**CHAIR:** Even dot points, anything at all.

**Mr Bond:** Sure. Thank you for your time. I appreciate it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you. We really appreciate it. Thank you, David.

**TAYLOR, Dr Wallace OAM, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I welcome Dr Wallace Taylor OAM.

**Dr Taylor:** First of all, thank you all for coming. It is most appreciated that you have made the time to come and see what is happening in this part of the world. I am here at this point in time putting forward some of the efforts of the Community Based Crime Action Committee. My history is long and varied. I carry the impediment of being closer to 80 than anything else which means that I have been through a number of 20-year cycles in these sorts of issues. I worked in the Public Service for 34 years. I have been in academia for 20 years and worked as a contractor in universities all around the world in developing countries and my interest has been in dealing with inequity and its social consequences and cohesion in communities, including youth development. On the negative side, I have been to more than 58 countries looking at this exercise which involved more than 100 trips around the world. On the positive side, I have been on the community police board which the previous minister for police, our local member, established in 2018 and on the CBCAC board since inception.

Whilst I totally understand the absolute necessity of dealing with the symptoms of youth crime and hearing the horrific stories that exist in our community, the reality is that if we continue to focus on that we will never stem the flow. We have to look at causation. A quick thumbnail sketch will bring you to the stage that there are somewhere around 7,000 people in the greater Central Queensland area on the Queensland government payroll one way and another having some responsibility for youth development. That includes schoolteachers, health people and all the organisations that the Queensland government agencies fund. It absolutely beggars belief that these organisations cannot address this issue.

As I said, I am old enough to have been around the 20-year cycles a number of times and the answers to the problems we face in an ongoing situation have been available here, in Queensland, in Australia and around the world for more than 20 years. The Queensland project was called Pathways to Prevention. It is available online. It was put together by Ross Homel AO, and a Queensland Great, for his efforts in crime. The CBCAC activity started three years ago and we undertook an examination of the programs that were running in Rockhampton to deal with youth crime. That project identified 90 programs and services being run by 35 different agencies with very little interaction between them. We then looked at the terminology and we found out that the same words had different meanings in different agencies depending what the funding was, so we undertook a process of trying to get people to get a common understanding of the various terminology and the processes that are used.

We then took a program called Mindhive which examined local, national and international input into determining what the issues were in this area to deal with youth crime. That largely came up with four key recommendations, and the first one was the need for a mechanism to bring the government agencies together in a cohesive, interactive approach, so this is an integrated service delivery mechanism. The second point was localised decision-making. The third point was collaboration methodology and then reshaping education to include things like Carinity as a responsibility of the Queensland government.

The sorts of things that we are talking about have been well established in this jurisdiction and internationally. The McKinsey organisation in its 2018 report looking at government interventions in 50 countries with 2,600 public servants found that the average success rate of government interventions was 20 per cent. You could increase that 3½ times by involving at least five disciplines in an interactive, cohesive approach. This was underpinned by a transdisciplinary approach which involves the agencies donating time and resources for allocations from within the organisation.

What is blindingly apparent is that in all my years I have hardly come across a non-emotionally dedicated public servant in their area of responsibility. The only ones who are not like that are the ones who have been burnt out because of the intransigence of their organisational strategic plan and their operational plans, with the point being that it is way past time for the government to establish a taskforce here involving all government agencies related to every aspect of youth development and follow the existing pathways that have been mapped out here and in like jurisdictions, particularly in Scotland and the UK.

A classic example to look at would be the efforts in Glasgow which, when the shipbuilding stopped and when the coal stopped, the best part of Glasgow was the road out of town and in the space of 12 or 14 years it became the cultural capital of the European Union. So there are decent models to follow. There are decent people in all of the public agencies, but the sticking point seems to be the fact that politicians like yourselves are elected for a short period of time and the commitment to longer term interventions is not high on the list, and it is the same for public servants. They are



trapped within their agencies' strategic plans and their operational plans and they are knowingly committed to progression through the system, their superannuation and their children's education and paying down debt which does not get rewarded by collaborations across agencies. The end point of three years of work by CBCAC here has resulted in things like the work that you have heard with Lyn Harland and the OurSpace activities. The next point must be about how we can formalise government collaboration where responsibility is for collaborative effort and promotion for collaborative effort.

I know that my comments probably sit very poorly with people who have been affected physically with youth crime, but there are sufficient resources available to do it; we just need to reallocate them in a way that has meaning and has responsibility.

**CHAIR:** Dr Taylor, I know that I said we would not have any questions, but would you mind if—

**Dr Taylor:** No troubles.

**Mr McDONALD:** Dr Taylor, thank you very much. Your community is very fortunate to have you and the knowledge that you have. I just want you to explain to us a couple of things. I was very interested—and we have heard from others—that paying governments to do things does not work; it is a plastic relationship. You had the 90 programs that you mapped, the Mindhive and then you looked at the other work that came from that and then the McKinsey program with only 20 per cent government success.

**Dr Taylor:** I did not quite get the question.

**Mr McDONALD:** Sorry. I am very interested to understand more about that. Have you got that in a submission that you could make to us?

**Dr Taylor:** We have submitted a small submission.

**Mr McDONALD:** Okay.

**Dr Taylor:** The McKinsey report on delivering for citizens is available on the link in the report.

**Mr McDONALD:** Okay.

**Dr Taylor:** An example that you might like to follow that is not in the report is that of Glasgow. Maureen McKenna OBE, retired, was in charge of the education system for Glasgow with 11,000 staff for that education system. In the UK, as you are probably aware, education is the responsibility of the local authorities—primary school education and secondary school education—and they then reconfigure that. When Glasgow started to fall apart after shipbuilding—they built the biggest ships in the world there—and the coal stopped, youth crime went up and housing went up into horrific levels and by reconfiguring the education system to include skills for life as a mandated part of the curriculum apart from the three R's they were able to turn that around.

**Ms BUSH:** Thank you, Dr Taylor, for coming along. I am a criminologist also. I studied at Griffith under Ross Homel so I am very aware of the wonderful work that he does. If I understand you correctly, it is not so much about additional funding and additional resources; it is a reallocation and reorganisation of resources and a redistribution of priorities and perhaps getting agencies to get rid of the silos and working together, sharing information and prioritising the response over the long-term. Is that the genesis of what you are saying?

**Dr Taylor:** To a point. I think you mandate that governments work together and provide mechanisms for promotion within that system. The suggestion that CBCAC has made is that this intergovernmental agency taskforce be advised by an expert panel of people who have had well-established senior managerial roles in the Queensland Public Service and who have demonstrated a lifelong understanding of community and people who understand research. Three names that we would put forward for initial consideration would be: Mick Shearer PSM, who is based here as a regional manager; Ross Homel AO, Queensland Great; and Michael Hogan, who was director-general of child safety. All of those people have a commitment in this area and have a deep, lifelong knowledge in this space and are interested in making a contribution.

As you are probably aware, Michael Hogan has already started his own effort to work in this space. The value of having people like that advise a local interagency forum is that they have no career to create, they are not dependent financially on anybody else, they have a lot to contribute and they can speak brutally honestly.

**Ms BUSH:** The burning question I have for you relates to the partisan nature of the youth justice debate and whether you see a way for us to move forward without a bipartisan approach.

**Dr Taylor:** I have spent 25 years looking at community engagement and public policy. I was based in Africa for nine years and have worked in six countries in southern and central Africa, Malaysia, the West Indies and many former Soviet Union countries. Community engagement is a terribly important component, but it has to have boundaries because people who do not know what they do not know, do not know. That is the stupid, silly reality. The first part has to be about how you put government agencies together in a mandated role, bringing experience in and having it guided by people who have nothing more to prove but have a lifetime of success operating in this area.

I get the issue about partisan politics. Every one of you is involved in it; I get that. There is no reward for you people not to be partisan. The public sector is a different issue. When you have 7,000 people and about \$700 million a year coming into Central Queensland, it beggars belief that you could not get one per cent of that money into a mandated, professionally managed and professionally researched outfit. Partisan politics is really a function of our lives. We all know that at this point in time we are going through a terrible part of our history in Australia professionalising rock throwing at one another. That is what we do for a living. We cannot interfere with that at this level, but we can engage with public servants who are on salaries. There is a lot of experience in the Public Service and you cannot blame people for stopping on the railway lines within their agency. That is where they get promoted; that is where their debts get paid; that is where their children get funded to go to school. You cannot blame them for that, but you can blame the governance of the Public Service. You can blame the governance of the political system. The challenge is in front of you people.

At my age and with my experience I came with not high expectations of today because we seem to be ignoring the reality that was proven to us 20 years ago. The work that Ross Homel did 20 years ago predicted this is what was going to happen. It was as clear as the report could possibly be. The Pathways to Prevention Project outlined how it was going to happen: the short-term nature of politicians; the partisan issue; and the constraints that the Public Service places on individual committed public servants—who are really deeply committed people—and educators. It is really hard to find a good word to say about the education system. When we have over 200 people in Rockhampton being kicked out of school and going to Carinity, surely the bells are ringing.

**CHAIR:** I am mindful of the time, but I know there are so many people sitting here today and listening across the country. I think everything you are saying resonates with what we have been hearing. Prevention and everything you are speaking about that needs to be done takes time. What do we do right now with those who are cycling through—coming through detention, coming out, reoffending, and going back in? In your opinion and in your experience, what is the one thing we can do right now that would make communities safer?

**Dr Taylor:** I get what you are saying about time. That was the argument in 2004 when Ross Homel delivered his report. It is 2024 and nothing has changed. The answers are there: it is a commitment to make the thing work. There are wonderful programs going on here, including Ourspace and Carinity. We have lots of very good things happening in this community but they are not working together. The thing that we can do is to mandate working together. The thing that you people can change is how the Public Service works. You can change the strategic plan of every government agency. You can put your eyes over the operational plan of every agency. You can mandate the development of a multi-government agency to work in this area with existing resources, but give them some operational moneys. You can do that today. You can do it next week. Apart from getting re-elected in October, the question that you have to focus on is what is your legacy going to be? Is it going to be the same legacy that faced politicians when Ross Homel delivered his report in 2004? Are you going to kick this down the road so that the next generation of politicians is going around trying to deal with youth crime in the state? You can do things next week.

Rockhampton is a very good place to start, and the reason it is a very good place to start is that, unlike Logan, it is a relatively isolated community. You can throw a saddle blanket over this area. It has an amorphous, but definable, boundary. You can make interventions here and there are sufficiently good, robust research methodologies that can come onboard from the start. Case methodology is available to us all. It allows us to distil principles. It allows you to commit to policy changes on the development—not after the end. You can deliver these things in situ at the outset.

**CHAIR:** Dr Taylor, thank you so much. We really appreciate your time. We do have your submission.

**FARMER, Mr Graham, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Thank you for joining us.

**Mr Farmer:** Thank you for the opportunity. My name is Graham Farmer; I am an old cockie from the bush. I was brought up in the bush. I went to a single-teacher school. A third of the kids were Indigenous. They were mates. They came to our birthday parties; they were members of our family. We stayed at their place; they stayed at our place. They were proper dark people. What made it possible with all of me mates was two things: when teachers came, the local sergeant's hobnail boots stood up in the corner of the room. They were both allowed to use them. I never saw them use them, but they were there. As kids, that instilled in us a level of respect. You do not do anything wrong when you are in that situation as a kid at four, five or six years old because you know that is the penalty. That has all gone by the wayside, so now we are paying the price. There is nothing surer. It is not about using them; it is about the opportunity to use them if you do something wrong, which then sets your mind right to respect—respect your teacher, respect the law. We are paying a huge price now because that went by the wayside and it will not come back.

Down the track when I was about 10 I had a year in Rocky. I got to ride a pushbike around town a fair bit for just about a year or so as a 10-year-old kid. Streets and intersections were deadly. There were accidents; people were killed. There is an intersection not far from here. Back then they used to paint a black triangle on the bitumen where somebody passed away. I can remember riding over three of them overlapping. We had a huge problem in that area. Someone, bless them, came up with this wonderful idea of roundabouts. We have all experienced roundabouts in our lives. There is no restriction on going onto a roundabout other than you have to wait your turn. When you are on a roundabout you have exclusive rights as to which exit you take. If you bring that analogy over to people's thinking, where I believe most things are going wrong is that we are dealing with symptoms of a problem without identifying the cause and where the cause originates. We talk about bad upbringing and abuse. That is a symptom; it is not the cause. The cause begins with a thought, and everybody has a thought.

If you can relate that to what I am saying about crime, no matter what aspect of life you look at everything originates from a thought. When you are dealing with this issue just imagine yourself on a roundabout. You have access to it; you have just to wait your turn. Other than that, you are on the roundabout and you have exclusive rights as to which exit you take. If you list the different opportunities or different exits you have, what I am suggesting is that you colour code them. Red is for bad stuff, breaking the law. Brick wall, the only way out is backwards to the roundabout. Then possibly the next colour would be yellow. We are dealing with 10- and 12-year-old kids who are wagging school. They can elect to wag school for the day, go fishing or whatever. That could be yellow. It is undesirable. It is not breaking the law, but it is not going to get you where you need to be. The rest can be green, and that is all good stuff: go to school, respect somebody, like somebody, be nice to somebody. They are all good choices we make.

What I am advocating is we have different one-liners that are around now like, 'Lock the gate', 'R U OK?' There are quite a few others. When you hear any of them, you think. My house has been broken into twice in the last 12 months, and people have said to me, 'Are you okay?' You stop and you think before you open your mouth, 'Am I okay?' If anybody puts any of these one-liners to you, you think. What I am advocating with this roundabout principle is ask the question, 'Where are you on the roundabout?' If you at this red one, you are heading down that track, it will be there for you to see—a dead end, pain, whatever. You have choices.

I think the key to moving ahead with all these issues is identifying the cause. Identifying the cause to me is the thought. Irrespective of what causes you to have that thought, whether you are abused or no home life or whatever, that is a symptom, but the cause is when you choose to put that thought into play. So, imagine being on that roundabout and you are like a muddle-headed wombat and all you can do is with your mates pinching cars or whatever, that exit is red and there is a brick wall. You have a choice whether you take that. You have a choice, knowing that the only way out is backwards. Simple! Maybe it is too simple. I am just an old bushy.

**CHAIR:** We love old bushies, don't worry. I come from the bush. Graham, thank you so much. We really appreciate you sharing that, and I agree with the whole matter around choice. It is about choosing.

**Mr Farmer:** I am hoping that some learned people looking for answers will start thinking along these lines, but the main thing is to accept where it all starts, and it starts from a thought.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much.

**ROBERSON, Mr Kyel, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Kyel.

**Mr Roberson:** I was not able to register, I could not find where to register, but I went a bit crazy with a little bit of research around the seven core values which I wanted to reference. Something that Mr O'Rourke, our local member, mentioned before when the question was asked to the aunties particularly around stakeholder meetings and information-sharing, and I think that has been one of the most crucial things that is overlooked in residential care, in supporting young people. Those that know much more than I, would that be a fair assessment? I am asking the lovely lady from Carinity. Yes. I just completed my Masters of Education last year. It has taken me 20 years to achieve that, which has been great. I hold a Bachelor of Advocacy which specialised in policy writing, community advocacy and land and sea management, but the main focus was working with intergenerational, vulnerable demographics.

What I did with each of the seven, as one example, there is a 10-year strategy for youth in Queensland which engages all government agencies et cetera. There was a study conducted by Lipsey and Cohen back in 2007 and the research study shows that consistently, as has been brought out multiple times—I just went and looked at research—the more agencies that work together collaboratively, the greater the success. However, with a lot of the youth services, there isn't that sort of collaboration or information-sharing, because of privacy issues. As a simple example, I work in residential care for the moment, casually, as I have to wait for the LANTITE which is six weeks before the results show; that is what all pre-service teachers have to sit for. I am working casually in residential care, so quite a bit of what we have been talking about. Sometimes we have had other young people come in where they are not appropriate to be at that residence for a whole plethora of reasons. The issue there is, as one example, less than two weeks ago for me personally there were two young people at the residence who should not have been there. I knew that one of them was from a specific service, but there were no means to be able to contact that pooling of resources that we have discussed. I do not remember the name of the doctor, but he was very fascinating to listen to, who was talking about the mandating of such things. I am happy to put this in a submission.

**CHAIR:** Yes, please.

**Mr Roberson:** It is quite succinct. There is one line of evidence and then one legislative policy that you will be familiar with, but it is just me doing my own research that is relevant, around stakeholders meeting, discussing and being able to share information. I must admit, the gentleman who was on before me, I found his choice of language not great. I think when you are talking about trauma that is experienced, 'whatever' is never a great term to use. I also think that children under threat of violence 'to behave' is not successful—the research shows that. I do not have an issue with smacking. That may sound contrary, but there is difference between beatings and smackings. I also think that with Child Safety itself, the organisation, they have approximately 1,400 frontline staff. The gender distribution is around 90 per cent female, 10 per cent male. Sixty-five per cent of frontline workers have a social working qualification. Seven per cent of frontline workers, CSOs, are from a non-Caucasian European heritage. Only five per cent of frontline workers are First Nations people. You have approximately 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CSOs out of 1,400, which is very disproportionate. That breaks down to around 10 male and 60 female frontline workers. There is gender disparity there that would probably be able to bring a much greater balance. That is just a statistical interest for me.

**CHAIR:** You will be putting in a submission by this Friday?

**Mr Roberson:** I will include that. I think I have said enough.

**CHAIR:** Wonderful. If you could get that in a submission, that would be really good.

**Mr Roberson:** I can do that. Thank you for the opportunity to come to present.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Kyel. We appreciate it.

**O'BRIEN, Dr Ken, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** I now invite Dr Ken O'Brien to present to us.

**Dr O'Brien:** Thank you very much to everybody on the panel here, and thank you for being able to take me on short notice. I am born and bred in Rockhampton. I was born at the Base Hospital in 1968. It is the town I grew up in as well. I was educated here. I obtained three degrees from the local university—to start off with. I then travelled internationally with my qualifications in neurology and genetics. I have been to America several times, working and studying over there, in Virginia and Washington and being a very prominent speaker. I have worked with our Department of Veterans' Affairs and multicultural affairs, as well as the immigration department, on the mechanics behind the heritability of post-traumatic stress disorder, so intergenerational trauma.

I have returned home because this is my home country as well. I pay my respects to the elders of the Darumbal people who have been caretakers and looking after this land, not just the physical land itself, but the people who live, breathe and work on it. The reason I have come home is because this town needs me. This is my home and it is struggling. As a seasoned academic with several high-level qualifications, I am absolutely distressed. How would you be if you got home after being away for a weekend—you have two daughters who are roughly teenagers—what if they had the run of the house and had a party that you did not know about? You got home and there was just mayhem. That is the people in this community. There is a collective community trauma going on, and it is not necessarily caused by the youth. That is a symptom of the trauma. The youth are a very clear sign that this community needs help. As a geneticist, I am saying that there is a lot of cumulative stress, whether it be because we are agricultural and farming, and we have survived droughts and floods and droughts within floods. Barry, you know what it is like. I have served in the State Emergency Service for 36 years and I have been an Army medic. I have seen my fair share of natural disasters. This is a very resilient community. We can be a resilient community if we are enabled to be so.

My esteemed colleagues have sat up here as well giving that information. I think I have joined five fan clubs since I have been here today. Thank you so much—inspirational speakers, all of them. But, guys, please, if there is one thing you do take home, it is this message that we can do it if we are enabled to, if we can have that collaboration.

Fundamentally, we need to have information. We talk about early interventions. Let's get right down to the genetics of it. Let's get down to where trauma starts. Let's get down to the genes that are moderated through a threat. We hear that there are a few families that seem to be the majority of the stress that is being implanted—not implanted—forgive me if my words do not fit quite comfortable. It is the square peg in a round hole scenario, but this is Rockhampton. We make do with what we have; we have for generations, even though we are in a bit of a bubble when funding seems to go north or south of us. Hence, we are sitting here today as a result of that bubble. I have travelled extensively, as I say, and I have experienced lots of different communities and I have worked amongst the people helping generate community-driven responses. With my knowledge of epigenetics and my knowledge of psychology as well, and some of the findings of my work has informed government policies to do with trauma, not just the individual, but the collective trauma, why are we not having something here that deals with that as well? Barry, I hope you go back to our council and say, 'We need a youth representative here.' I think Freddie McCartney is the person for that. It is a travesty that she has been lost from your community in a role that was pivotal. She saved lives. She was a hero. I will take my hat off, I will take my clothes off to put it on her back any day. Whoever made the decision to pull that funding, they should be sitting here today. However, that being said, I would feel that there is more scientific evidence that needs to be included in any practical response around this. It has to do with the true origins of why there is a need for a thrill, which is to compensate for a threat.

I will say that in other ways because I saw that you were scratching your chin and looking up at the ceiling there, Mr McDonald. The neuroepigenetics and biomechanics around threat are almost identical to those around thrillseeking. If you have studied PTSD people—particularly those in veterans communities, as I have, and emergency services—they seek thrills to compensate for their fears. They will jump out of aeroplanes and do HALO—high altitude low opening. They will ride fast on motorbikes. They will drive into business roller doors at great speed because it is not about the consequence; it is about the thrill. Their brains are evolving and, to my learned colleague from the university, yes, there are studies out there—neurological and neuropsychological studies—that show that our social media and those seven-second bytes of information that we get are evolving youth brains. Those brains are still under development. When we need quick sharp information, we might call that ADHD when they are rapidly distracted by something else. We might call that autism. There are lots of labels we have on it, but this is evolution to an increasing amount of stress that is happening in our environment so to compensate they seek the thrill. The brain operates on exactly the same

neural pathways or if not exactly the same then very similar. These kids adapt. They are evolved from us. Their brains are not the way we are. In some cases, they fire 20 times faster than ours do so they get bored quicker than we do. They cannot focus because their brains have evolved differently. Stress has everything to do with that.

We are a resilient community and we could develop a response here if we are empowered to do so, if we include the science into the practicality. If you get a thesaurus and look up the word 'academic' the antonym is 'practical'. The antonym of 'academic' is 'practical' so why don't we bridge the two? Why don't we have a combination of the academic science and the 32, or however many, organisations that come from this community to serve this community so they come together and form that bridge? We work together because we have already proven that we can make the best out of what we have. I was president of a postgraduate students' association for seven years and I read a study where we were declared the most resilient community in Queensland and it is no wonder why. Why can't we build on that?

I implore you to include some of that science in there. I implore you to include some of the epigenetics, particularly the neuro side of epigenetics, because not only can an environmental event create a problematic environment; it can reduce its onset as well if you have the right environment. I take my hat off to Carinity and I take my hat off to the organisations that work on a more passive approach because you cannot devolve in the same amount of time as you have evolved. Evolution takes one one-hundredth of a second. That information is implanted on the DNA and that becomes a multigenerational trait. It takes a lot longer to devolve that information so this will take time and it will take concerted effort. I thank you for your time and this opportunity.

**Mrs GERBER:** I want to ask for a point of clarity. I wanted to ask it of OurSpace and Carinity as well but I did not get the opportunity. They spoke about Central Queensland Health, the Central Queensland reference group and, of course, CQ Youth Connect being defunded. Were those government programs that were being delivered in Rockhampton or was it an NGO? Can you give me a bit of detail around what happened there?

**Dr O'Brien:** I am a bit of a social butterfly. I go from one organisation that needs me to the next and I do not know the detail. If there is somebody else in the room who can answer that I would really welcome them to do so.

**CHAIR:** Mr Higgins, Hansard will need you to come to the table. Dr O'Brien, thank you so much. Please put in a submission. We would really appreciate it.

### **HIGGINS, Mr Geoff, Private capacity**

**Mr Higgins:** I am a business consultant here in town. I work with community organisations and I work in the space of assisting the journey that we have been on in community development. I am also doing a PhD in that space. Talking about CQ Youth Connect is a bit of a passion area for me. Friederike McCartney, who is a clinical nurse consultant in Rockhampton, established the program 10 years ago. In the past six to 12 months there was a lot of antagonism within CQ Health around continuing that program. It was obvious that some people in management were not happy about its continuation. There were concerns about the funding model that was supporting it. They were legitimate concerns, but the problem was that the disconnect between the funding and the work that was happening meant that the work ultimately ceased happening so that program was shut down in November, I believe, last year.

It had been a program that had been really well established in our community. Lots of the organisations you have spoken to here have worked with that program, CQ Youth Connect, over the past 10 years. It was a real success story for our community. My belief is that some personality issues underpinned some of the problems that have occurred there and also, as I said, there was a mismatch between the funding source that was being used and the work that was happening. It is not that the funding was not appropriate to the work—

**Mrs GERBER:** Just to be clear, CQ Health is an NGO that was delivering the program?

**Mr Higgins:** 'CQ Health' is the term for our HHS.

**Mrs GERBER:** So it is government?

**Mr Higgins:** It is government, yes.

**Mrs GERBER:** So the government was meant to be delivering this program and they did not provide the funding and then it had to close down?

**Mr Higgins:** The government was delivering this program through one of their own staff members and they closed it down internally. It was not external; it was run inside. That was the title that was created inside Queensland Health. I use the term 'CQ Health' because that is what the CQ Hospital and Health Service has been calling itself over the past couple of years. Yes, it was a government program. It was operating across Central Queensland, so much more than just Rockhampton. It went out to Woorabinda, Emerald, Biloela, Springsure and other small communities. It employed a couple of people. It was mentioned earlier that it employed a couple of Aboriginal not health workers but community workers.

The issue as I have understood it—this is my understanding of what was going on—was that there was funding coming through the Making Tracks funding, but the program was an open program. The program was not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, but it did deal with maybe somewhere between 40 and 60 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. I was suggesting that perhaps it needed to be topped up by the Queensland government so that it would not be solely using Making Tracks funding. It was using other funding because there were a lot of people volunteering their time so there was a lot of in-kind contribution, and there was funding from Carinity and other organisations to support a number of activities and CBCAC funded some of the other activities as well.

We have been really passionate about this. You guys come and ask us what we can do about youth crime and we are saying that part of the early intervention is about young people having access to education, young people having access to health, particularly mental health, and an understanding of FASD and how FASD is really affecting not only our young people but also their parents. The labelling that comes with using terms like FASD to describe a condition that a young person has can mean the mother, in particular, is vilified through the actual name that we have given to the condition. That sort of work happens through CQ Youth Connect here locally. That is the organisation that really galvanises people's interest and gets them around the table. It has, up until now, got them around the table.

Other areas like education in sexual health, assisting young people to understand about termination of pregnancy and their choices around contraception, an understanding about sexually transmitted diseases—there is a huge wealth of information that was being shared in the schools, at NAIDOC Week and at other events that were happening. A line was just drawn in the sand. The questions that Lyn asked were really important to us around why community was not consulted because if community had been consulted we would be saying: expand the program; do not shut it down.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much for that. We really appreciate it. I realise that we have run over time. However, if you do not mind, two others who had not registered have put up their hands because they want to say something. If everyone is happy, we will go for a bit longer. For those who have to be somewhere else, I totally understand.



**HOOPER, Mr Chris 'Pineapple', Private capacity**

**Mr Hooper:** My name is Chris 'Pineapple' Hooper. You might know me, I think. You all voted me out. You changed the legislation to get me out of the mayoral decision. Do you remember that? Anyway, I will not say any more about that.

I am a bit of a bushie. You all know Murradoo Yanner from up Cape York. Didn't he give a submission up there? He is a tribal elder up there, around Burketown and that. You would have heard his statement. He has a really good statement. He believes in taking a lot of the kids, the rough-nut kids or whatever you want to call them, out bush and giving them a bit of bush love. Some people will think that, if you have an ordinary kid who is quiet, you can talk a kid into something such as what these people are talking about. But if you have a kid that is rough love, you can teach them a bit of rough love pretty quick. It works for a lot of people. You have to take them bush. One of the comments that I heard from you, I think, was that they had to say yes to go if you are going to take them bush in that situation. You cannot do that because they will not want to go.

You can take them bush. I used to muck around in youth shelters and stuff like that, canoeing down the rivers and all sorts of stuff. You can put them under pressure and those tough kids are weak as water, really. It is like a mob of bikies: they all have their facade. You can work on kids differently. I am saying, for the bush kids, you can do that. Murradoo Yanner got it and there is an islander bloke in Rockie I was talking to and he did it years ago. It does work. You can solve it. You have to take them for a month or more. You will get the drift if they come good.

I was talking to that bloke there this morning. He was talking about something simple. This is a bit of a different chain of thought. He came to me this morning at my shop and said that he plays soccer and it is hard to get people into soccer now. There is no funding for ordinary soccer teams. We are spending all this big pie-in-the-sky money for all this good stuff, but the basic little clubs are going. I played football, Rugby League and all that sort of stuff. That can sort a lot of kids out, too. There is a lot of that that we are not doing anymore. It has a lot to do with funding. All of the little clubs are not getting any money because it is all going to the big clubs that want to go to America to play football. That is about it.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much. We really appreciate it. I know that there are a lot of hands going up.

**DOYLE, Ms Stella, Private capacity**

**CHAIR:** Welcome, Stella.

**Ms Doyle:** Thank you. I wanted to probably mention a couple of things from a community's perspective. I have been listening and working in this space in Rockhampton predominantly for more than 20 years—I know, I'm young. Just in hearing what everyone is saying today, there are a couple of things that really resonate with me. I will start off with the recommendations that came out of the royal commission into deaths in custody. One of the recommendations was around when people incarcerated they are incarcerated close to their community—their cultural community. When we think about our young people here in Rockhampton, and wider Central Queensland, when they are incarcerated they are sent to Townsville or they are sent to Brisbane. It is something that I am really passionate about. When young people are incarcerated they are sent to communities over 800 kilometres away from their community, their cultural connection, but also their family and kin.

For a lot of these children or young people who are offending, when you actually unpack and actually ask the question why, why are you offending, a lot of it leads down to trauma, neglect and abandonment. When we are actually sending these children away to incarceration, away from their community, it actually just elevates that sense of abandonment for them. Here in CQ we have kids who I know, because they have explicitly told me, who offend because they feel abandoned, they don't have food at home, they like the thrill of it and then they come back. One young person in particular I can tell you was released and caught reoffending and basically put back in the process of being re-sentenced within eight hours of his release—so that turnaround time frame. I actually went and saw him in the watch house and I said, 'What the hell? What is going on?' And he was like, 'Nothing has changed here.' He is like, 'No-one wants me. At least in there I know I get a feed, I have got a roof over my head, I can play games and I get to go to school.' So, you know, we talk about engagement of services and things here in CQ, and I agree with Dr Wal, yes, it should be mandated, because we get so caught up—and I say this respectfully as an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person—in making sure that we are being culturally appropriate that we are actually forget about the human rights of these young people and we forget about the human rights of our wider community as well as their overall safety and wellbeing.

The other thing that is probably a big thing in our community is we have heard lots of talk about funding and resources and one of the things probably in the last 15 years that has probably caused division within our community is the tender process for funding. What we are finding here is we are actually being provided with service providers who actually know nothing about our community here. They know nothing about the demographics and then they come in and go, 'Oh, but we spoke to your local Aboriginal traditional owner group.' That is good, that is fine, that is protocol, but for here in Rockhampton it is actually a larger population group. Yes, it is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but we actually have quite a multicultural diverse community here. I think if there is a review or even an unpacking of what that tender process looks like and having a look more at local-based organisations but also organisations that have local solutions as well.

One of the other things as well is we have talked about data and a big bugbear of mine is throughout this whole review and committee and stuff I want to know at what point in time does the truth testing of the data actually occur. I say that respectfully, because, as I said, I have worked in this space and place for a long time and I am well aware of organisations that go, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, we work with a lot of kids', or, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, we do this really, really well.' On paper it does look like that, but in real life it does not.

An example of a solution for that, and I am not sure how aware you are of it, is the family-led decision-making model. Currently that model sits within the child protection space. It has been trialled in the youth justice space. It was trialled with four Indigenous service providers across the state and it has been trialled—and I hate to use the word 'trial' because it has been a two-year project, but within that two years of those four pilot sites there were less than five referrals from a youth justice service centre. That is over two years duration. The biggest part about family-led decision-making is it is a process or a pathway towards self-determination and it is where family actually get to have a say in that process, whether it be ramifications or what rehabilitation might look like for a young person. It is also a process that includes and actually allows for the person's young voice to be heard. A lot of our processes do not allow that, and this is something that I think is imperative moving forward.

The other thing in saying that is that is just one model. If you look at the community as a whole, yes, we have lots of service providers and we have lots of resourcing, but when you actually unpack that a lot of it is duplication of services, particularly if you are unpacking it in terms of what that looks like for access—that is, the opening hours after hours—and what it looks like for early intervention.

There has been a lot of talk about FASD here today and I can tell you now I supported a young person and it took more than 24 months to get him assessed for FASD, and the only way I actually could get him assessed was in juvie. The results actually came out that his FASD was quite bad—it was really bad.

Just two more points that I wanted to make is as a community member and a taxpayer, blow me, the cost of insurance. Because of the youth crime in this region, my insurance has gone up by \$800 a year and that is just my house insurance. My car insurance, I will not even tell you about that. It is increasing every year. I work hard and I like nice things like the rest of you, but I should not have to be paying extra because of someone else's crime.

I just wanted to leave you with this. There are three kids that I have worked with in my time. One was a young person and he had an intellectual impairment and therefore he was under a mental health order. He was 14 at the time and he was arrested for crime. Because he was under a mental health order they could not transport him to detention in Brisbane for a number of days so they actually put him into the mental health unit here. He was a 14-year-old boy in the high-dependency unit with very volatile patients in a volatile setting with no support. They did not notify his parents. It was only because my role at the time was to do checks and things that I actually went into where he was being kept and this poor child was in the fetal position just sobbing. His clothes were wet just from sobbing. I said to him, 'Oh, darling, what's wrong?' And he said, 'I just want to go home. I don't deserve to be here. I stole something because I was hungry but they've put me here.' I said, 'Okay, well, what does your release look like? What are you doing?' And he is like, 'I don't know, they won't let me call my mum.'

I went and spoke to one of the directors and I said, 'What's going on with this kid?' They said, 'Oh, he stole something. He's got to be here till we can send him to juvie.' I said, 'Alright. How long is that going to take?' 'It probably won't happen until next week.' 'Mmm, no, it won't.' He was released in 12 hours. Subsequently, he was released in 12 hours with no support. His mother was not notified and he actually was not provided transport to the community where he lived. As a result, he died of his crimes on his way home. That is something that has really stuck out for me in my career because as much as I can do my role to advocate and support, it actually just highlights that it has actually got to be a holistic approach. Everyone has a role to play. At the end of the day, this poor child had an intellectual impairment, something that was beyond his control, yet he was constantly punished for it.

The other one is I had a young girl, same thing, she was caught up in the wrong crew and at that point in time my staff were not refusing but they were reluctant to work with her because she didn't engage, she was always abusing staff et cetera. I said, 'Righto, I'll go and have a yarn with her, see what's going on, see if I can get her to come.' I got her in the car and I said, 'How have you been?' 'Yep, good.' I said, 'What did you get up to yesterday?' 'No, we just went to the park.' I already knew—I had intel—that they actually got into mischief. I said, 'Oh, you went to the park?' And she is like, 'Yeah.' I am like, 'What else did you do?' She was like, 'Nah, nothing.' And I am like, 'I know that you did more than that.' She is like, 'Oh, yeah, we stole some cars', blah, blah, blah, and I am like, 'Why?' And she is like, 'I don't know.' I said, 'Why do you do it? Do you do it for the adrenalin?' And how she responded I was just like, what? She said, 'What's that?' I said, 'Adrenalin. Do you know what adrenalin is?' And she is like, 'No.' I said, 'It's a feeling where you get a big rush because you feel good and you've got to go and do it.' And she is like, 'Oh, yeah, sometimes I do it 'cause I like that feeling.' I said, 'What's the other reason you do it?' And she was like, 'Cause I get bored. There's nothing here for us kids to do. Everything is in school hours and there's nothing else here for us to do.'

So her thing was to go hang out in the park and steal cars. I said to her, 'So, why do you do that?' And she said, 'Well, 'cause that's what my friends do.' And I said, 'So do you think that they are really your friends if they are making bad choices?' And she is like, 'Oh, I never really thought about it.' Anyway, fast forward. I saw her last week actually just up the street here and I was like, 'Hey, bub, how are you going?' And she was like, 'Yeah, good.' She was pushing a pram. I said, 'You're pushing a pram. What's that about?' She is like, 'Yeah, remember when I went to the park and we stole that car?' And I said, 'Yeah,' and she is like—I was just like, oh my God. I said, 'That's not cool.' She said, 'Yeah, but when that happened I had a think about what you said to me and you know how you were asking me why?' She said, 'I've never forgot that conversation and now that I think about it I don't want my kid growing up doing what I've been doing.' I think we get caught up in the moments where we think—we get stuck on that merry-go-round and we think, 'Here we go. Another day at work. Why do we do the things that we do?' We come up with the old cliché it is because we care, but it is little moments like that that actually remind us of the importance of why we need to turn up and why we do the work that we do.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

**CHAIR:** Stella, thank you so much. You have heard me say it 100 times: submission by Friday. I can fit one more witness in.

**HILL, Ms Breann, Private capacity**

**Ms Hill:** I will just grab up a couple of my notes.

**CHAIR:** Please, anything you have there can you send it also in a submission?

**Ms Hill:** Yes, I will. Firstly, I have worked in the sector in this community for—a little bit like Stella, because I am so young—over 20 years. One thing that I guess has really resonated with me today is for some time I ran residential care which was a dual residential, so children under the Child Protection Act and also under youth justice. Multiple kids had gone through that kind of residential, but there are three children that I now informally support as they have exited care and the reason for that is because—I think they were 12 when the department contacted us and asked us to put in a submission to get them off the streets. These young people had been removed at a very young age and, like Dr Ken O'Brien said, within our community there was lots of intergenerational trauma. Our community is very complex. We talk about a sense of belonging when there is no belonging if you are living in this community and have been brought to this community and you do not know where your mob are or anything like that. These young people came into the residential and they had committed a lot of crime. These little kids were breaking into houses, stealing the keys, cooking toast while they were in someone else's house, going into shops, driving cars through bottle-os, jumping registers, things like that.

I have a really good relationship with the kids, and that took time. When we talk about programs and funding, one of the problems is time. Funding rounds are three years. That is not enough time to build a relationship and do some really meaningful work with children and their families, because I now informally support their dad as well as their mum through different processes. I would ask, for instance, 'Why were you cooking toast in somebody else's house?' I did not understand why this young man thought he had the right to go into somebody else's house, grab the car keys, take a whole bunch of antiques and cook two pieces of toast. His response to me was, 'I was hungry.' He had absolutely no idea that was wrong, to start off with. 'What did you think would happen if that person had woken up and you were in the kitchen cooking toast? What would you have done?' I would talk to them about the impacts of that, but again that takes time. It takes the same person to be there regardless of whether you agree with what they do or whether you do not.

When we talk about a collaborative approach, if stakeholders have time then absolutely there is no problem with information sharing within our community, but it is time. From CSOs who have a huge number of cases—they cannot do the work that needs to be done with the kids—to organisations that have this much funding and are expected to be on call 24/7 and be responsive, to the schools. When you talk about funding, we do not have the funding that it takes to make a difference in kids' lives. I have asked why they do it. 'To see if someone cares.' If I drive a car and I do this—yes, to see if someone cares. To see if somebody comes and brings me a spare set of clothes down at the watch house. So I can have a shower because I have been kept in there for up to 30 days. To see if anybody visits me in detention in Brisbane. To add to the dopamine hit. When we look at crime and we look at what needs to happen within the community, it is not rocket science. It is going back to basics: going back to being available and having time to be real with the people of the community, because that is when we will make a real difference. I have worked, I have developed frameworks. I have just finished developing another program. You can have all the paperwork, you can have all the recording and the systems and everything in place, but you have to have people who care enough, who are not exhausted—because all of us who do care are exhausted—to do the work to make the difference. A lot of the young people who are doing crime can be turned around.

Sending them to detention does not work. Our detention centres do not have the programs. There is no rehabilitation. Like I think someone said before, when a lot of kids get out their parents are not right here. They are under child protection, so they get off a plane and they do not even know where they are going. There is no transition. Imagine being a young person who at six months of age was removed from their family and had 52 placements by the age of four. So you are four, you have had 52 placements. You then go into a kinship option. You are now 12 and you have been sexually abused by your kinship carers. Then you get on the streets and you are stealing because you are hungry. You are going to steal cars because it is that dopamine hit, but we want to see if anyone wants to chase us and care enough about us. You go into residential care, where you are cared for eight hours a day by different people in a house that you have no control over with signs and rules up. You then find substance misuse. Then you are in and out of detention. You are in detention, and it is great because it is controlled. You do not have to worry about what your mum and dad are doing. You do not have to worry about what your older or younger siblings are doing. You do not have to worry about when you are going to see them next because you are safe here.

Public Hearing—Inquiry to examine ongoing reforms to the youth justice system and support for victims of crime

When you get up to your release date you are scared because you do not know where you are going to go and who is going to pick you up. The residential I previously lived in has a time frame, so no-one is going to pay for a bed that is not being used, so that placement is closed. That is just all gone. You get off the plane and your new CSO comes to meet you because they are rotating and exhausted as well. You get to go to an organisation where you know no staff. Usually you are there by yourself to start off with because you are classed as extreme needs, and then the cycle continues. I think it is about going back to basics. Let's support, give more time to make a difference.

**CHAIR:** Thank you so much. Thank you, everyone, for bearing with us and staying the extra time. That concludes this public hearing. I want to thank everyone who has participated. Please have your submissions in by Friday. Anyone who wants to share either their experience, their knowledge, or what you think we should be looking at or doing, please get it in. As you know and I have said before, we are aiming to have our interim report and recommendations out by 28 March. I would like some feedback from that as well. Just go to our website for the link to submit that. I want to thank our Hansard reporter. I know that I have put her under a lot of strain because she will have to pull all this gear down very, very quickly. A transcript of these hearings will be available on the committee's webpage in due course. Thank you everyone, and blessings to you.

**The committee adjourned at 3.06 pm.**