

Youth Justice Reform Select Committee inquiry into youth justice reform in Queensland

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From: [Ken Dickson](#)
To: [Youth Justice Reform Select Committee](#)
Subject: Youth Justice Reform Enquiry
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Attachments: [Behavioural Characteristics of Young People - 28.11.23.doc](#)
[Behavioural Characteristics of Young People - The Education Program 28.11.23.doc](#)

To Whom it May Concern,

Attached are 2 documents to be included in the submissions for the YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM enquiry. One document outlines a proposal to improve the behavior of young people using a methodology of school related education that will, hopefully, reduce crime and provide some self-awareness by offenders/possible offenders. The other document (attachment), provides a suggestion on how to include the appropriate subject matter in the education program.

There appears to be no immediate “quick fix” to the current situation of youth related crime. A medium term solution should also be considered and this is what I have proposed.

My details are:

Ken Dickson

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Ken Dickson

Re: Proposal to Improve the Behavioural Characteristics of Young People

Much has been written, discussed, argued etc. about the behaviour of youth in Queensland (and in fact nationally). In particular, youth crime.

The purpose of this letter is to provide a recommendation to develop and implement a system to improve youth related negative behavioural issues impacting on our society. The recommendation also constitutes an attempt to assist young people to understand that they must take responsibility for their actions and the failure to do so has consequences.

Clearly youth related crime is an issue costing money, time, patience, anxiety and the outcome of which has many other negative outcomes on society. In order to achieve the goals set out in this letter, I believe young people require training/education within the formal school education process. And yes, this is not always possible however let's look at it from a numbers point of view, i.e., how many people will a positive outcome benefit compared to those who will "always" offend.

This will not be an "easy fix" as inconsistencies may occur between schools, for example, public, private and those with cultural and religious backgrounds. Although these inconsistencies do/may exist, a way to circumvent these problems should be able to be found.

The contents of this letter should be read in a general sense and makes no discrimination for cultural or religious differences. It is also appropriate to highlight that this letter does not discriminate against young people but in fact seeks to develop them as individuals.

The Problem

The negative behavioural characteristics of young people in today's society feature almost every day in the media. The issues that immediately come to mind relate to stolen vehicles, road crashes, road rage, graffiti, break and enters, bashings, rape, drugs and their related outcomes.

The problems are well recognised and documented and many individual proposals have been compiled and considered to try and reduce the numbers of these instances. I see this approach as important but "piecemeal" as these proposals are invariably developed for individual issues and do not necessarily address the fundamentals from which these problems are derived. For example, road related issues are addressed by each state and territory and separate rules/laws are being or have been established in an endeavour to reduce road crashes amongst young drivers.

It would appear that it is almost impossible for some young people to understand the consequences of their foolish behaviour and/or take responsibility for their actions. Too many times we see media coverage where issues are "laughed off" by offenders. And I think we all accept that there are situations where social backgrounds, lack of parenting etc., have led to some of the current juvenile criminal activities.

The medium to longer term solution, I believe, is to go to the source and educate **all** young people about their responsibilities to themselves, their families and society. That being said,

there are (at least) two problems relating to the contents of this letter; they are “how do we solve the immediate issues” and “what can we do to decrease these problems in the future”?

This letter relates to decreasing the behavioural problems of young people in the future. The problems occurring in “today time” is for others to determine and take appropriate action.

Proposed Solution

I propose that consideration be given to establishing a **school delivered program** to educate young people about behavioural expectations and the consequences of non-acceptance of these expectations. The program, if deemed successful, could be considered for rollout on a national basis.

The subject matter to be based on three headings, these being “**Respect**”, “**Responsibility**” and “**Rules**”. These could be referred to as “the three R’s”.

Following is a broad range of points outlining the underlying relevance to each of these categories:

Respect

- For themselves as individuals
- For property, including financial loss
- For morality
- For family, peers and other people

Responsibility

- For their actions. For example, the decisions they make will dictate the life they lead.
- To their peers, family and society.

Rules

- Rules experienced in everyday life
- The laws within society, and
- Very important, the repercussions of what can happen if these rules/laws are broken

The program must outline the repercussions of non acceptance of these lifestyle requirements.

Details of a proposed course contents are outlined in the Attachment to this letter.

The process may take considerable time to provide measurable results. Success would be measured by reductions to numbers relating to theft of vehicles, road accidents/deaths, road rage, break-ins, shoplifting, minor and perhaps major crime.

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen who is looking to improve safety, reduce crime and develop the youth in our society. The introduction of a program within the national education system would be ideal, however, a plan to support Queenslanders is a good start. I recognise that the introduction of such a program will not solve the immediate issues in the juvenile

system, it will however, over time, develop a process to not only support the juvenile network but also be a base to reduce crime as the juvenile's become adults.

There are many more issues that I have not touched upon however I would hope that my proposal is worthy of further consideration by those people qualified to do so.

I would be happy to discuss any part of this letter with you or your representative should you deem it worthwhile.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Dickson



The Education Program

The program should be compulsory and delivered through schools as part of the normal education process. I outline below a suggestion on how the subject matter could be structured and delivered.

Subject name

For example, Lifestyle Development, ????????

Audience

Children starting at first year of high school; **perhaps younger if deemed appropriate by the educators.**

The structure/methodology for delivery of these topics should take into consideration those children that intend to leave school and not complete their final years. It may even be appropriate to have this 'subject' delivered only in the years up to and including the completion of the first formal 'leaving' certificate. Again, the educators are the experts to advise here.

Delivery

Delivered as an individual subject or perhaps incorporated within an existing subject.

Frequency

To be designed and delivered to coincide with the maturity of the children/young adults. For example, the subject matter should be developed to complement the developing maturity of the audience. More about this later. At commencement, the subject matter to be delivered, say, fortnightly and as the children mature, perhaps once a month is sufficient? The process of greater frequency in the early stages is to ensure that maximum impact is delivered early in the program.

Subject Matter

To be developed to encompass, among other things, issues/outcomes relating to student actions/behaviour in everyday life. For example, road accidents, road rage, driving an unlicensed and/or unregistered vehicle, graffiti, break and enters, bashings, rape, drugs and the related outcomes of being involved in these circumstances.

The subject matter would include standards of acceptable/expected behaviour for young people and include examples of specific situations. Examples are easily derived from every day life. It would also include details relating to non acceptance of expected standards and the impact it can have on their lives and others around them, including family members.

As the children near their later years of schooling, consideration could be given to expanding the subject matter to include an introduction to:

- personal management of finances, including budgeting
- borrowing money
- interest costs relating to debt
- management of credit cards
- other?

Examinations

It is proposed that the subject not be subject to examination although, depending on the format of the subject/subjects, the educators may consider examination as worthwhile.

Responsibility

Responsibility for introduction and ongoing success of the subject should rest with the Minister for Education. This could also be done in consultation with the QPS, Youth Justice and other stakeholders to gauge success.

Funding

It may be expensive to develop a program of this nature. However, given the financial cost to government to manage the current circumstances of juvenile crime, the cost to individuals, insurance companies and the social grieving following crime related activities, I believe that, over time, financial expense would be recouped by governments (State and Local).

Disadvantages

- Appropriate staff would be need to be allocated and/or sourced and a project established to determine feasibility of my recommendations
- Should the plan be approved, resources would be required to plan, develop and write the course content
- Teachers would need to learn the subject matter. This may involve the input from QPS, Youth Justice and other stakeholders.

Advantages

- Save lives
- Reduce unsocial behaviour
- Reduce crime rates
- Reduce anxiety in society
- Reduce the financial expense this behaviour is costing government/s, small business, insurance companies and society in general
- Provide the skills to allow people to manage personal debt
- Reduce police time devoted to these types of crime
- Reduce time spent by several other stakeholders working within the judicial system
- Potential to reduce the need for incarceration
- Improve social acceptance of different cultures and religions
- Improve awareness of non acceptance of the three R's