

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

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## Youth Crime

My wife & I lived in the NT for 25 years and although we have never lived in a community, we both visited many communities from Tennant Creek north to the Tiwi Islands and from the Western Australian border to the Gulf, as well as working closely with many very good Aboriginals.

This gives us the belief that to tackle the youth crime problem (which has always existed but appears worse now) you need to tackle the core issue. That being, if you give anyone, whether black, white or brindle money without a purpose in life, anyone, through boredom, will soon resort to alcohol or another substance abuse. Gambling, violence and alcoholism is the result of boredom.

In communities, there is nothing to do and no motivation to do anything as you will always get your dole payment, regardless. My wife worked alongside an Aboriginal single mother who could get more from Centrelink staying at home than she was receiving as an Aboriginal teacher's aid. She only worked, because she knew that if she didn't, she would end up like all her relations.

Restricting alcohol sales in our opinion will never work. You should look at the statistics on the long term success of doing this. On our last visit to Katherine, NT it was the first time that we have seen Aboriginals drinking spirits. You surely know that if you are an alcoholic, you want more bang for your buck and spirits (1 bottle per person per day) goes a lot further in achieving the desired result than beer or wine.

If the parents are drunk all the time, they cannot manage their children. Could this be the reason the aunties and grandparents are often the carers for children in communities – we believe so. Children are clever and soon work ways around carers who may be looking after a number of children and might be elderly.

We do not know the answers to solving the core problem of youth crime, but any government trying to solve the problem must start at the core issue first – the parents and boredom.

There must be many Aboriginal people around Australia who could throw some light on how to solve the core issue of parents and boredom. By adopting their suggestions, you may be called a racist or that you are discriminating against the Aborigines, but nothing will change unless a government takes positive steps, in conjunction with the communities.

We have not lived in the NT for 18 years now so would not be able to recommend any Aboriginal advisors but there are many people employed at the coal face who could advise you. You just have to ask.

One last note of advice. Do not use the Aboriginal problems as a political football. It will take determination, guts and a long term commitment to resolving these problems. It won't happen overnight.

The Voice Referendum was flawed from the start. You could initiate a trial, or several trials of possible solutions to see if they are accepted by the communities or town camps and to see if they make a difference.