

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

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Attachments:

Submitter Comments:

I would like the committee to consider the fact that the current system appears to be serving absolutely no one other than the “industry” around the revolving door of the current system. Victims of crime are certainly not being served, particularly in regional communities where barely a person exists that has not been impacted in some way. People live in fear in their own homes, and security systems appear to be no deterrent. When crimes are committed against us, the perpetrators appear to have all the rights and there is little or no redress. Surely it is a reasonable expectation of the community that serious attempts are made to address increasing numbers of vehicle thefts, home invasion and other property theft, along with what appears to be escalating levels of violence. The men and women who serve in our police force are also certainly not being served by the current system. Quite apart from the fact that they deserve to go home safely to their families like any other workforce, they must be exhausted by what appears to be an endless loop of “tag and release” of juveniles. They are forced to deal with the same individuals again and again, whilst watching escalating issues and being powerless to stop them. It must be unbelievably demotivating and demoralising. It also appears that they are so under resourced that they are forced to prioritise to a point where they are rapidly losing the confidence of the community, and they can take no action until serious consequences have already occurred. Finally, the juveniles caught in the system are most certainly not being served in any useful way. The recidivism rates in this country surely demonstrate this more clearly than anything else. It appears to most community members that they are briefly incarcerated only as a final resort, way beyond what would be a community expectation. They are then placed directly back into the exact same conditions/circumstances that led to the offending in the first place, and everyone in the system (except the police and regular citizens) then appears surprised when the behaviour happens again and again and again. Fixing this issue will take both political will and moral courage - alongside a genuine commitment to real change and not the revolving door of what has become an industry. Until government begins to treat the drug problem in Australia as a public health issue and not a criminal one, and genuinely begins to tackle root causes, things will not change. The system does not appear to be working, yet we continue to do the same thing for the majority of offenders. There are now multiple proven programs that have demonstrated approaches that drastically reduce recidivism rates. Most of these, however remain isolated projects that are run by smaller organisations, on no or limited government funding. And yet they demonstrate that with genuine commitment to offering a real path forward to offenders in terms of accommodation and employment post incarceration, real change is possible. Why, then, are these approaches not attracting more government funding than the model that has demonstrated for decades now that it simply does not work?