

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

Submission No: 89
Submitted by: Gaynor Williams
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

On the early hours of [REDACTED] I was woken to the sound of our neighbours dogs barking, this in itself is nothing new, except seconds later my own dog started howling and irking up from our bedroom. I sprang up to see a light outside my bedroom window, this made me jump out of bed and wake the rest of the house up. My husband was asleep in back bedroom as he had been at a meeting which ran late, I screamed that someone was on our garden, whilst at same time, banging on walls to make as much noise as possible. I ran towards the garage, to see my car indicators/door lock being flicked on and off, i ran back towards the bedrooms screaming that our cars were being stolen, by which time my whole family were awake, my Husband, Daughter and Son were all in the family room by this time. Both my husband and I went back to the garage where I grabbed a hospital crutch, we opened the garage door, we saw 3 Aboriginal kids run away from our house, heading left towards the end of the street. I ran to the end of the drive, turned to run to the left, towards my neighbours house, to see a larger group of Aboriginal kids/adults ripping fence panels off another property. I screamed at the top of my lungs to "[REDACTED]" hoping this would deter them from coming back to our house to get our cars. By this time, my husband had realised that they had both sets of car keys, one to mine, a Kia Stonic, the other to his a Black 2020 Kia Sorento wagon. I froze as the group, of about 10 started shouting threats at me, and a few came towards me, they were less than 20 meters away from me by now. They all started running my way, so I retreated back to the garage screaming that they had weapons- we were by this time beginning to be pelted with planks of wood from the fence. My husband tried to stand his ground and was telling them to just leave, but one of the older adults, who we deemed to be the main perpetrator came up the drive with pure menace, shouting at us to get back, he was standing no more than 5 metres away shouting at us, but also brandishing a machete type weapon at us, he was also attempting to get into the Sorento. He was shouting at us that he was going to hurt us and encouraging the others who were not only throwing rocks at us from the side of our garage, but to the other thugs who were standing in front of my daughters car, and our car. We were threatened with being rammed with our own cars, other voices were not only encouraging then act, but also making threats of violence towards myself and my family. Whilst this was happening, another two stolen cars turned up on scene, each packed with Aboriginal people, both these cars were shouting encouragement to the ones stealing our car. We knew we stood no chance of stopping them, they had caused damage to my car in the garage, and were set on taking the Sorento, my son managed to close the garage door, which i truly believed saved us from more violence. We heard our car drive off, reopened the garage, to see that all the 3 cars gone. Ours, a Blue Ute and a white MUX. I went to my next door neighbour to my right, as her ex partner is a policeman. She came out to help us, our immediate neighbour had luckily managed to capture it all on his security cameras. Thankfully the Police arrived within less than 10 minutes, which we believe to be a good response due to our location, Once they were here, I escorted an officer inside to see that our patio door and screen door was wide open, the officer went to the back of our house, to where our laundry is, the internal door was closed, but the external door and screen door were also wide open, the screen door has been cut. All our doors had been locked prior to my going to bed earlier in night. We also realised that my husband wallet had been taken as well as the car keys. This invasion has left us with a fear like no other, we feel violated. Our daughter to this day doesn't feel safe alone in the house, despite having extra security precautions. It took her over 2 weeks to feel she was able to drive after it turned dark. Myself had to take several weeks off work with stress, it's a vicious circle, I don't feel safe in my home, I don't want to be alone after dark, but don't feel safe

outside either. My husband and son both felt terrified of what could have happened. We as a family, are now waiting for psychology appointments to help us manage the reoccurring dreams, my son still wakes up every night at two AM. We hear every noise, see every shadow, we are arguing between ourselves because of the trauma. What sickens us, is the fact we heard via the news report the same night, a police control officer stating that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This was obviously our car. Our car was later found burning in [REDACTED] A kind citizen had videoed our car, reported it to the police/Fire Brigade. We would like to know why these dangerous criminals were allowed to be in the low security farm, were able to walk out, and be somehow involved in our car theft? We have also heard that one of the younger offenders had been arrested, he was in Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, boasting about being involved in our house invasion, theft of a vehicle, threats of violence towards us, was let out after less than 24 hrs inside. Where is the deterrent? The punishment?? We are innocent victims of crime, which sadly is prevalent in Townsville. The criminals have all the rights, where we have none. We feel that the state, local and federal government has let us down. The repercussion for the criminals is next to nothing. We hear way too many times by certain elders that it's because "they have a hard life". These kids have the same opportunity, if not more as every other child in Queensland. To say that they don't know right from wrong is ludicrous, breaking into someone's house, carrying tools of their trade (bag, gloves, masks/face coverings, weapons etc) in the middle of the night is wrong. The Judicial system is in favour of these criminals. The judges give a "slap on their hands" instead of a custodial sentences. I believe that even though on their first time of being arrested, this isn't always their first offence, strict parole laws for 1st time offences, depending charges, once the criminal has been arrested a second time, parole should not be an option, they should be held on remand until they attend court to face the charges. I personally don't care if the jails/Detention centres are over crowded, so what if they have to sleep 6+ to a 2 man cell, so what if they have to spend 23 out of 24 hrs a day locked up in said cell. We hear about the luxuries they have in juvenile detention, this needs to be stopped. Start giving the hard labour to complete. Adult prisons are in my view much the same, they have too much freedom. Who authorises violent criminals to be placed in a low security area? Why has no one from the youth justice dept stood in front of me and other victims to say sorry? Why has it taken me several calls to our local state MP for him to respond the go on to say the State has the best youth crime laws in the country. Our State Government has let us down. We have been advised by QLD Victim assist that any claim we have put in, for loss of income, cost of installing extra security cameras/lights will be at least 18 months to 2 years to process. Lastly, myself and my family have no issues with the Police or Prison officers, they try to do a hard job with their hands tied by legislation. It's time we let them do their job, without fear of reprisal.