

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

Submission No: 95
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

My home was broken into by two teenagers- the neighbour identified one of the intruders and we knew he was a troubled local youth. The police came and took the report but said they couldn't take any action as only youth crime division can proceed further. The report was sent to youth crime and no-one went to investigate for over two weeks. I had obtained the mother's details through local friends and called her regarding our stolen items, she then found some in his room and returned them. She begged me to press charges as she was unable to control him and was hoping police would intervene. She rang me about ten days later and asked if I'd even reported the break in and theft as no-one from police had contacted her son and he was continuing to be out committing crimes. During those two weeks the child had thought he'd got away with the theft of our property as no-one from police had done anything. Our property was also being sold within those two weeks whereas if instantly investigated they could have retrieved our items. Some very sentimental family items. When I called Youth Justice at Boondall over two weeks later, I was treated very rudely and told they have a pile of paperwork of reports and receive more offences each day and will be getting to it after they get through prior reports. They told me it often takes longer than two weeks so count myself lucky. This child did not even know the police were involved over three weeks after the crime was committed and was out continuing the same behaviour. After it was investigated they said they don't charge kids and they do mediation. A mediator was sent to my house to explain the process. She was useless. She explained that even if we mediate and agree to something, he can't be held to it, it's just a nice promise. I could not ask for payment of property stolen that wasn't returned. I asked what I could ask for and she gave an example, if the child put graffiti on your fence you could ask them to help paint it but gave no example for my situation. I do care about troubled youth and I wish a better life for them so I put together a list of things I'd like him to think about and put it in a letter to me. Points like - *his personal goals for the future- *if he doesn't get along with his parents, a list of people he can confide in, like close friends that are of good behaviour, teachers, extended family* an apology I had about ten points that were for him to think deeply about his actions but also about future choices I also explained to him in mediation that even though he'd done this I still wanted the best for him. I really felt like he understood he could change and his letter was thoughtful and gave other positive actions he would do in the future. The mediation was great but I felt it was only because I cared to make a positive difference for him. The actual Mediator did not suggest anything and was useless, there should have been a format or ideas like this given to me. If it was a different victim they might have just asked for an apology which would make no change to the troubled youth. My Suggestion- note, these are for after an offence has happened

1. IMMEDIATE ACTION BY POLICE- not shelved at youth Justice until they find the time 2. A Process or compulsory course of self improvement, self reflecting, create a plan for the future, most are problems with family issues at home, a discussion on how they can deal with those issues, who they can turn to. THIS ALL STEMS FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD. ****My suggestion for Proactive change****_****Whilst it should be on parents, many children are not receiving adequate support from a very early age. The most constant community members in their life is teachers. Their workload is way too high already. There needs to be more dedicated support staff, more programs within school, a framework to identify those children and positive areas beyond schooling, (even a minibus for each school to sports activities and a dedicated Big Brother friend type person. Too often the specialised programs in school are about improving their school results when these children also need guidance, a friend, self love, some fun, some way of creating a better life, not just sitting in

detention or a school room then going home to a terrible home life. School attendance rates are a huge indicator of problems at home, maybe some type of pickup program as it's not the child's fault the parent isn't getting them to school. Even a Centrelink monetary rewards program for high attendance rate might make parents more responsible. It shouldn't be on normal schooling to raise a child but currently there's nothing else available for children from struggling homes. Create a whole new environment that gives them a positive life for 5 days a week not just learning outcomes, call on local sports clubs, communities, police, social services, child protection etc to extend a great life experience and an all round program