

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

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Dr Amanda Beem
Committee Secretary
Youth Justice Reform Select Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

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9 January 2024

Dear Dr Beem,

Please accept a brief Youth Justice Reform submission on behalf of Mornington Shire Council (Council).

Council believes that concerted efforts need to be undertaken, to ensure diversion and reducing recidivism amongst youth offenders. Council provides services for the Wellesley Islands, predominantly the community of Gununa, on Mornington Island.

It is apparent from Queensland Government Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships *Statshot*, 18 October 2023 that an extremely disproportionate number of Mornington Island youths (in comparison to greater Queensland rates) have had formal youth justice supervised orders and unsupervised orders. Similarly, unique youth offenders, 10 -17 years of age is extreme for Mornington Island.

Council aspires to proactively discourage antisocial behaviour and resulting orders, as a direct service provider. This correlates with the committee's terms of reference pertaining to "community-controlled organisations... [and] the role of First Nations peoples to provide support solutions and services".

In collaboration with other stakeholders including Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Queensland Department of Education, Mission Australia, Salvation Army, 54 Reasons and Junkuri Laka, Council has capacity to provide community-based programming and on-country programming which fosters healthy social engagement, whilst simultaneously comprising informal education, as well as positive wellbeing outcomes.

Council is focused upon a trauma informed and therapeutic care model, with local mentoring, support, and guidance, designed to provide cultural awareness and instill healthy habits amongst youth. As such, Council appreciates Commonwealth Government NIAA funding and Queensland Government funding to enable ongoing customised programming.

One of Council's prevailing challenges relates to ensuring that parents and carers are actively involved with supporting young people. Unfortunately, adults are often despondent. Council has not yet devised local strategies to alleviate this challenge.

Anecdotally too, we have found that youths from Mornington Island that have been in custody at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre have been inclined to verbally romanticize and promote the experience positively for others because it involves a flight to the mainland and a different environment. Obviously, Council and community members aspire for youths to understand the seriousness of being detained at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre. It is important to change local narrative so that the prospect of youth detention becomes a genuine deterrent; and youths gain a true understanding of undesirable consequences, which can result from offending.

Further, Elected Members assert that local "lore" and customs are also important considerations when embarking upon a youth justice journey. As such, Council is currently working to secure funding for Bentinck Island programming, in collaboration with other First Nations Councils. Bentinck Island already has substantial infrastructure in place and offers a viable alternative to conventional detention. Other than securing recurrent funding, the greatest challenge pertaining to a Bentinck Island solution-based approach relates to suitably qualified workforce attraction and retention.

Council looks forward to formal outcomes from the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee and ongoing meaningful youth justice reform in Queensland.

Yours sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Ms Skye Price.

Ms Skye Price
Director Corporate & Community