

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

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Submission: Youth Justice Reform

Dear Committee Members

On [REDACTED] our property was rocked by two juveniles walking past our residence which resulted in two broken glass panels in our dining room. This was a most unpleasant experience as these youths were unknown to us and neither of us was in view when they walked past. It cost \$1000 to repair of which the insurance company paid \$400 so we were \$600 out of pocket.

My husband and I are retired schoolteachers and at the time I was 64 and my husband 68 years of age. We had lived in Dalby for 40 years and resided at our current address for 33 years with absolutely no issues. We are self funded retirees, receiving no income or subsidies from the government.

People in Dalby are appalled that this type of behavior is allowed to continue with very little consequences for the offenders. In recent times, I know of several incidents of glass breakages at businesses in Dalby.

There have also been incidents of youths in [REDACTED] throwing bottles at cars driving past. We also had stones thrown at us from the toilet block as we walked past [REDACTED] at 8pm on [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. There have also been car thefts and house break-ins that have been reported.

From what I understand, these offenders will appear in court and be given a caution.

Meanwhile, we are left to consider our options.

We have very few choices:

- a) Stay in our residence and fear for our safety wondering when and what the next attack will be
- b) Ramp up security at a substantial cost to us. However, this cannot prevent further attacks.
- c) Move to another location at enormous social and financial cost as this was going to be where we lived for some years to come.

As these offenders appear to be between the ages of 12 and 16, I question if they are “Earning or learning”. As a resident of Queensland, I believed that youths must be at school until the age of 17 or earning an income. This doesn’t appear to be the case for these youngsters. If they are expelled or suspended from school, there must be another pathway offered to rehabilitate these young people.

What options are there for these offenders once they have appeared in court? The options available under the Youth Justice Act include the following:

- a) Restorative Justice Order whereby offenders have to face their victim. This can only be used for crimes that an adult would be liable to serve a period of imprisonment for. I understand that many victims would be unwilling to participate in this process because of the fear of further retaliation.
- b) Probation Order
- c) Graffiti Removal Order
- d) Intensive Supervision Order
- e) Conditional Release Order which is an alternative to detention
- f) Detention Order
- g) Use of GPS devices. This was introduced after the last election but only for offenders over the age of 16 years.

Also \$98 million dollars has been allocated over four years to target core serious repeat offenders and young offenders. There are certainly options available to manage these offenders.

As outlined in the Youth Justice Act, the community has a right to live without fear of continuous threats from such offenders who appear to delight in causing trouble for others. The victims are the people who are being penalised financially to repair such damage. It is also very frightening to be confronted by such deliberate acts of destruction to your personal property.

The Youth Justice Principles include the premise that 'the community should be safe, particularly from serious repeat youth offenders' and the 'young people should be held accountable and encouraged to accept responsibility for what they have done'.

The Youth Justice Policy supports contemporary youth justice practices to prioritise community safety; address issues related to youth crime; collaborate, co-ordinate and provide services and reduce offending. The Youth Justice Framework for Practice operates to 'drive improvements in youth offending outcomes' and 'keeping communities safe'.

I understand that there are many more serious issues that need police intervention and investigation. Although each incident may be classified as minor, it has become a major problem within the community because of the relentless nature of these incidents. For us, this has been a major incident and has left us quite unsettled and anxious.

The Youth Justice Act clearly outlines the policies and practices that need to be adhered to. As a community, we should demand that this Act is adhered to with the Court process beyond reproach.

The community deserves some deliberate action to curtail these ongoing acts of vandalism.

I appeal to this committee to urgently review how Youth Crime is dealt with. I understand the implications of youths being held in detention centres but there needs to be deterrents so that community members are not impacted by this mindless crime. There needs to be early intervention to rehabilitate these youths.

We continue to be impacted by the incident that happened to us in 2021 and certainly are more anxious than before. It must be horrific for people who have been severely impacted and to those who have lost loved ones in home invasions is unthinkable.

Yours sincerely
(Mrs) Janice Macmaw