

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

Submission No: 173
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Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Queensland Parliament

Youth Justice Reform Select Committee

Call for Submissions

Submission

This submission is written simply to express my concerns over the impact of youth crime on law-abiding citizens of Queensland and steps which should be taken to reduce significantly the occurrence of such crime.

At present, the premise of the government and police seems to be that the answer to the unacceptable level of youth crime (often armed) is to appeal to these young criminals' better nature to stop carrying out their crimes and to lavish all sorts of specialist "programs" on them in order to help them mend their ways. It also seems to use the mainstream media to achieve these ends.

Only in the last few days has the new government in Queensland decided that an additional part of the solution might be to provide more police actually out on the streets instead of having them sit behind their desks and computers back in the police stations. However, the police cannot be everywhere and certainly cannot be expected to have the good fortune to always be at the scene of a crime.

It is patently clear that all of these measures, whilst worthy, are not and will not achieve the reduction (preferably elimination) of youth crime of the sort which we see on the TV news **every evening**. This includes break-ins and home invasions of decent peoples' homes and business premises, car thefts often involving threats from knives or guns; and violently dangerous high-speed vehicle "joyrides" which are the motoring equivalent of running around a crowded shopping mall randomly firing a gun in all directions. A speeding motor vehicle is a lethal weapon, especially more so when the driver is under the influence of drugs or alcohol and any crimes using such means should be treated much more seriously than they are at present.

This brings me to the real cause of such an upsurge in youth crime and that, without a doubt, is the highly lenient way in which perpetrators of all sorts of crimes are treated by the police and the courts. These criminals are not watching the mainstream TV news or reading actual (old fashioned) newspapers to get their news, if at all, but get any information exclusively through the medium of social media and word of mouth from their similarly inclined friends. They also celebrate their criminality by the use of social media. Therefore, any appeal to young criminals or potential criminals via any sort of mainstream media will not fall on deaf ears but no ears at all. The **only** way in which the authorities can hope to effect change is through much stronger punishment, longer custodial sentences (or actual custodial sentences since the courts don't seem to send any of the young criminals to jail) and genuine pain (loss of freedom or finances) to the perpetrators. If young criminals saw their mates being put away for a realistic amount of time, thus affecting their whole future life due to having a criminal record, they would have cause to re-consider their future actions. Yes, such a harsh response should go hand-in-hand with education, job training and the like, but at present there is just no deterrence to the offenders who may get caught, put on bail, let go and the next night they are at it again. What sort of justice system is that for the 95% of law-abiding citizens? The first and most important duty of any government is to provide for the safety and well-being of its citizens. The Queensland Government is manifestly failing in this duty by actively allowing offenders to constantly escape any sort of sentence which would actually deter them. This is **wrong**. The majority of the population is being made to suffer from the actions of a small but persistent minority who cause harm and loss to others far in excess of that which they themselves suffer. This is **unfair**. What right do these criminals have to do this? None.

I know it is unfashionable to call for tougher punishment for criminals, especially young ones, but the existing regime is clearly not working and sentences which act as a deterrent to others is the only way forward.