

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

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Youth Crime - an Alternative way forward

The concept of crime and punishment has been with us for centuries and has always been problematic in terms of costs, reorienting criminals etc

Youth Justice legislation has been in place for 30+ years - despite all the amendments its still not working / its not fit for purpose - and is a multimillion - if not billion - industry - legislation /state parliament, police, courts, solicitors, probation officers, psychologists/ mental health, social workers, lock house / detention, prison officers, catering/ cleaning to name a few - a revolving door of catching children, putting them through the legal process and releasing them back - to the same toxic family/ street environments they come from that foster counter cultures to main stream society - so the cycle continues

The question no one is asking is - are there better ways to be managing children who commit crime - well there is - its a total care process from the early years onwards when currently there so much damage done to children- through parental neglect/ abuse - emotional, mental, sexual

It's important from the outset to recognise all the counter culture family/ relatives/ peer groups/ streets in each locality - and work with the child and their family differently - right from the outset of the birth of a child.

Early intervention opportunities are fine with receptive families, however where parents are not - decisions need to be made regarding management of the ongoing welfare of the child and hard decisions need to be made early on in a child's development. As we all know, having strong significant relationships with a child throughout their development is key. Where parents abdicate their responsibilities through behaviour/ substance abuse etc then providing an alternative warm/ stable environment is key to a child's long term welfare and would be a massive alternative to the current 'sentence bound' catch/ release to toxic families, Friends, streets

So rather than a 'term sentence' for youth offenders from toxic family, friends etc - children from this type of environment need to be provided for differently with :-

Trained Family Counsellors - from all ethnic groups - to work with parents/ community home from birth - helping parents/home providers to access a medical / educational support initially - and later coaching parents in managing discipline, morals and consequences.

Psychological studies demonstrated children understand right from wrong between the ages of 2 and 7 years of age children via consequence management support. By the time a child reaches school age young children are aware of how their actions can bring consequences I.e play date cancelled etc

At school - Parents / home carers encouraged to attend Parenting classes that are run by Behaviour management trained teachers - supported by educational psychologists - and incorporate talks from Elders of the communities, Police Officers, Child Psychologists etc. Also moral education classes in school from age 5 upwards using stories like Aesop's fables etc

For any school behaviour issues - counselling at the outset - followed by school discipline/ suspensions carried out IN SCHOOL. No longer will suspended children be allowed to stay at home for the term of

their suspension but they will be educated in a separate classroom, having different break times thus relinquishing the Badge of Honour they seem to wear from each suspension. They will find that there are Consequences for their actions, just like in Adult world and in the working environment. Reintroduction of Truant Officers to aid and assist Schools in the Consequence Management and School based Suspensions.

Children at Risk:- Parents of children who, are school age, exhibiting behavioural issues at school will be required to attend compulsory parent classes with counselling, parent/teacher case management conferences, community leaders and monitored chastisement by parents for under 12s/ consequence management. Where parents fail to actively participate in the behavioural modification programs the child could be deemed at risk and Foster care/ small foster homes could be considered and parents loose child welfare .

Children at risk over 12 to be considered for Boot camp/Petford program, Sports or Arts programs.

NB All the above takes place for children identified as being at risk AND before they are charged with a crime I.e. sort the problem out before it becomes a problem

Children and Youth under 12 commit a crime - decisions re removal of the child from their home environment need to be considered - suggested that small I e 6 children - secure community homes so children cant walk off - run by trained counsellors from the child's ethnic group are available as these children are damaged and need ongoing support to help them learn new behaviours / choices - NB important to note that Trained counsellors from child's ethnic background - with the child staying in their community home until they have completed their education, had skills training to secure a job and have supported accommodation - so the community home raises the child, builds significant relationship with the child through stable counsellors who stay in role for the duration as surrogate parents / family - AND without interference from multi agencies impacting on the child - which has been shown to be so detrimental to children in care whose support system is a moving feast. So the counsellors / educators are the child's main focus - with team meetings between the two to ensure a balanced, consistent support for each child to be part of the community

Children 12+ who commit crime sent to a secure boarding school. Run in similar lines to a community home

Children who commit serious crime i.e rape, murder etc Secure detention centre in outback for child/youth over 10 till they reach 18, then serve the rest of their sentence after they reach 18 in a correctional centre with ongoing consequence management.

NO mitigating circumstances. The approach needs to be consistent with NO mitigating circumstances for drugs/alcohol/substance abuse/ mental capacity or poor decision making - all actions lead to consequence management.

Release following any of the above interventions is to a Job with supportive accommodation to help them find their feet. No release to the same home/area/toxic streets where the child came from.

'Stolen Generation' concerns should not apply when a child is identified 'at risk'- as they are being placed in community homes with counsellors from their own ethnic background If they are not removed from their Tixic environment they are at risk of becoming the 'Lost Generation' due to poor parenting,

poor education, poor social skills, substance abuse and toxic lessons in crime on the streets. if needed - run a 'lost generation' media campaign to change perspective that leaving children in damaged homes creates damaged children