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To: [Youth Justice Reform Select Committee](#)
Cc: [Noosa Electorate Office](#)
Subject: YOUTH CRIME
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To: youthjustice@parliament.qld.gov.au

Committee Secretariat
Youth Justice Reform Committee

My Family and I have been subjected to youth crime on more than one occasion. We had our previous home in Sunshine Beach broken into, and a large quantity of money, jewellery, clothing, tools and other household goods were stolen. One culprit was apprehended by the police for other 'break and enters' twelve months after our break in. He and his brothers were all well known to police, committing crimes from the time they were around twelve years of age. Our car was also stolen by juveniles. They were apprehended in Byron Bay with stolen goods in the vehicle, and again, they were known to police. Our Factory building in Noosaville was burnt out in a serious fire, apparently an arson attack. No one charged, but the suspect was an adult in this case. Two other break and enters also occurred at the Noosaville factory, however I have no knowledge if anyone was ever charged. Fortunately we have not had any incidences in recent years.

Crime has impacted all of us and our life in our community. It is getting worse, you have the opportunity to make a change, TAKE IT! Youth crime is on the rise and becoming more violent. Recent incidences in Ipswich, where victims were killed, badly injured or left traumatised is a sad and awful example of this. Once again, as we hear night after night on the TV news, the perpetrators were known to police and on bail. This pattern is unacceptable, SOMETHING needs to change.

One of the Youth Justice Reform Committees objectives is "**to reduce the numbers in custody on remand**". This is putting the cart before the horse! If the guilty parties of the above crimes had been kept on remand, the Ipswich lady would be alive today as would Emma Lovell from North Lakes, many others wouldn't be left wounded and traumatised. How, by keeping the youth committing crimes out in the community, instead of on remand, is that going to reduce the

crime levels? Crime levels have to be reduced to reduce the “numbers in custody”. It appears by current crime levels that more should actually be on remand while systems improved to negate long delays in getting perpetrators to court.

As we see it the problem is twofold. There is the current problem of youth crime to be dealt with, and then, a long term programme of keeping kids (and guardians) from going off track and having self control and self respect needs long term investment.

1. An increasing number of youths are out of control. These youths need to be made accountable. The softly softly approach is obviously not working, proven by the number of repeat offenders. This end of the spectrum must be dealt with firmly, and without fear or favour. If more remand centres are needed, build them. Incorporate strict rules, teach life skills such as cooking and cleaning, along with skills appropriate to joining the workforce. Teach them so they leave better people than who they were when they arrived.

2. The root reason of what is happening to cause these young people to go off the rails needs to be addressed. This is the big picture. Cultural issues, lack of good parenting and lack of good role models are all contributing factors. Kids need to go school, they need to want to go to school. They need structure in their lives, if they don't get it at home it needs addressing in the school hours. This intervention need to be strict, fun, build self esteem, and this needs to start at the beginning of their school years not left until patterns of bad behaviour and disrespect for any authority are ingrained. School staff levels need increasing and appropriate training introduced to address these issues early.

Any Youths currently between 10 and 18 charged with any offence that includes violence then NO BAIL should apply and aggression and anger management programmes implemented and made compulsory.

These young criminals have no respect for the law as it stands. They are making a mockery of law enforcement and the judicial system. If on bail and they breach their bail conditions they should forfeit the privilege and be placed in custody for the sake of the law abiding community. Those in custody should have no access to mobile phones, laptops or television however they should have a library and an education system that includes everyday personal skills, and looking after their own environment.

I believe that a system of National Service should be introduced from 18 to 20,

the service run on a state basis for the whole community where young people are educated to help during natural disasters and provide community service as required. Teach them how to work and set them up for integration into the workplace. Make work mandatory, employed by Governments, Charity Organisations etc. As 58% of young criminals reoffend in the first 2 years this may help in breaking the cycle.

When Qld government passed laws banning the purchase of knives by minors, this QLD Parliament became a farce. It is already illegal in Australia to carry a knife of any type (other than a Swiss Army type of pocket knife) in schools and public places, by ANYONE. ENFORCE the law that already exists! Banning the purchase of knives will not change anything. Maybe a placebo affect for politicians that a law has been passed in parliament supposedly addressing youth crime was achieved? Knives are readily available in every home, restaurant etc. how can the banning of knife purchases by minors limit access to using a knife as a weapon?

School attendance levels are dropping and our level of education is on a decline. How many times do you hear school is boring, how well attended are sports carnivals, swimming carnivals? School Pride? I know of students who are well below required attendance levels. Students and their parents are spoken to by the school staff, but, it appears little change is achieved and no consequences enforced. Ages 10 to 15, students have to be educated to be self reliant. To know how to feed themselves nutritionally, be accountable and responsible people, be aware of anger management, especially in relationship to Domestic Violence, and to learn to use electronic devices responsibly, hopefully reducing the amount of bullying.

The community needs more tradespeople. How many high schools have education programmes encouraging less academically inclined students in trades such as bricklaying, automotive repair, auto electricians, electricians, plumbing and roofing?

Our grandson attends a local school and wanted to do a trade subject, however not enough positions were available in the two trades classes available. He was offered "Surfing" or "Media Studies" as alternative subjects!! Im sure many other students are also in limbo. Hardly any incentive there for these students to feel motivated at school or furthering a future career outside of school! The need is there to arm the kids with the skills to get a job, not to have endless hours and energy to get into trouble. They need to earn a living, not steal for a living. Perhaps the Basics card should be implemented for unemployed youth?

There needs to be greater effort to support the parents of those children who may be headed to crime, or who may have already committed a crime. We do not need multiple different organisations all overlapping their services. However we need ONE, one organisation that is well supported and can answer the questions and provide the support and guidance to families. A well funded, well managed

department, using best practices sourced from successful applications, both here and overseas. Example Denmark has been very successful managing juvenile crime. Obviously not all families and guardians are made equal and a life of crime may be all some know. Programmes to direct youth and families into worthwhile pursuits are needed. Participation in training programmes should be compulsory not optional, penalties apply.

The Justice System needs a huge overhaul.

Firstly Parliament needs to review all crime penalties, starting with Youth Crime and enact laws that reflect the mood of the community.

If a person commits multiple offences then the sentence should represent multiple offences.

If a person is released early and then commits another offence, then they should serve the remainder of the previous sentence before serving the next sentence.

Any time in remand is not taken from the sentence finally ordered. If a person admits guilt, he immediately commences his sentence and saves the court time.

The sentence should be the time to be served.

The problems with First Nation youth also needs to be addressed. The claims of invasion and racial discrimination are no excuse for a life of crime and breaking the law. Having lived in Dubbo NSW and travelled extensively through NT & WA we are very aware of the problems faced by Aboriginal Communities. It's not an easy life for many, others make good and we have had personal relationships with plenty of folk who are well respected. Around mid **1980's** a community meeting in Dubbo was called to address a crime spree of youth in the town. Police, the Local Member, Local Councillors, Aboriginal Elders, Citizens, Church & Community groups attended. Muggings of elderly men and women were occurring regularly over a long period of time in the city streets, break and enters had increased and stolen cars were common place. The majority of problems were caused by one group of young men, most who were of Aboriginal descent. The call was very strong to make the parents responsible. The question of "how" was never answered. This is the same question being asked today. Nothing has changed in **over forty years**. The various Aboriginal communities could become accountable for their young people in their own community. Appropriate facilities, responsibilities, and expectations are needed along with support and consideration of perhaps, a different way of control. But control there must be.

The crime spree happening in Dubbo at the time virtually ended when the ringleader was killed in a car crash while driving a stolen car. The rest of the group basically did not continue as a gang without their leader. Sadly the strapping healthy young man, who probably could have been a high achiever had he chosen another way of life, was not mourned by the general community. He was feared by the young teens in the area, and rightly so. He put one 15 year old boy in hospital with amnesia for three days after a King hit. Our son (15yrs old) was a witness to the assault at the local pool entryway, and when being interviewed as a

witness, our son raised concern at how often the boy in question was being released, crime after crime. The policeman sitting in our house expressed the opinion the young man was a danger and would likely, eventually kill someone, it turned out to be himself. Why now, when watching the television reports of CTV videos and the reports of court outcomes for these groups of young thugs in Qld, why are we reminded of another time over 40 years ago? It's a very poor reflection on society, State & Federal Governments, and the Judicial system, that solutions still have not been found, that good reforms, suitable punishments and accountability, practices that will make a difference, are not in place?

The rights and welfare of the general community and victims of crime should be paramount. The rights of the law breakers are secondary, their rights negated by their actions against society and then only regained with good behaviour. They should be treated with a view to reform, but they need to learn respect and earn the right to be reformed. Not a slap on the wrist and "Dont do it again....and again....and again...."

Finally there is no point in a Youth Justice Committee if there is no REFORM, there is no point in reform unless the ATTORNEY GENERAL is going to take ownership of the REFORM and insist the courts and young law breakers do the same.

In other words they all have to be responsible and accountable.

To do this there must be regular and thorough monitoring of any system implemented.

Yours Faithfully

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