

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

Submission No: 207
Submitted by: Cairns Central ALP Branch
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Submission to Youth Justice Select Committee

Author: Ms. Trish ODonohue

Branch: ALP Cairns Central Branch

Email: cairnscentralbranchsecretary@gmail.com

Mob: [REDACTED]

CAIRNS 4870

QLD

Friday, March 1st.

Achieving community safety is complex, as most violence occurs in the family home. It is often inter-generational, and the complexities are driven by sexual assault, alcohol and drug dependencies, mental health illnesses, poverty, homelessness, and other factors, too numerous to mention here. This is exacerbated by structural disadvantage such as lack of investment in services for young people and children experiencing family violence through their lives. Including a lack of alternative supported housing for young people wishing to leave the family home, for their safety and wellbeing.

When they don't feel safe at home, and have no-where else to go, many young people will couch surf, live in over-crowded accommodation, sleep in cars, sleep rough, try to access refuge accommodation, which isn't easy and is also under-funded and is overwhelmed by the demand, locally and nationally. Challenging circumstances to know who you are and where you belong. This paints the picture so many young people and their children face today and have faced for many years. The consequences of under-investing in services for young people. Creating a generation of "troubled youth" who often don't care about the consequences of their behaviours. These behaviours and lack of empathy are the result of their traumas, where most likely they were not respected, and often sexually assaulted and abused, their traumas often left untreated. Spiralling them into a life of crime and lashing out at a society that has already mistreated and abused them. With a what have they got to lose attitude?

While there is no magic solution, there are steps we can take as a Cairns community.

Building on our strengths and making a difference to the lives and safety levels of our community. Cairns is very fortunate to have Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good (DIYDG)

E: cairnscentralbranchsecretary@gmail.com

They have the trust, respect, and support, of their community, and the broader community. The level of DIYDG's community knowledge, their understanding and deliver of cultural safety, that is embedded in their programs is what attracts First Nations young people and sees them maintaining these relationships that other services struggle to do. DIYDG's integrity, professionalism, and commitment to community safety, and accountability all feature in their approach.

We would like to see the Cairns response including a strong key investment in DIYDG's approach, growing their capacity, to meet the growing demand.

DIYDG engaged 30 young recidivist offenders in education, via a home-schooling model with the support of semi-retired and other teachers committed to supporting these young people. Unfortunately, those responsible for the funding, changed the goal posts overnight with no warning or consultation and removed their funding. Leaving the young people feeling duped, dumped, and devastated, reverting to their old ways of lashing out again. Who could blame them? Those responsible for this devastation are never contextualised in media reports of the latest spate of youth crime. **We have to do better.**

Moving forward communication to and about young people and their advocates needs to improve, especially from all levels of government, their bureaucracies, and media outlets.

DIYDG's model and approach is trauma-informed with an Indigenous lens that sees the interconnectedness, covering every aspect of the young person's life. Unfortunately, it is at odds with the way our departments and bureaucracies are structured in a very siloed way, though there are funded integrated programs, developed through many discussions and negotiations. **It can be achieved.**

Imagine a Cairns or a Queensland or Australia where homelessness didn't exist. Where everyone including young people and their children had a safe place to call home, that they could afford providing the stability they need to access employment, education, training, address their underlying issues, that provide alternatives to using violence. Crime rates would head drop considerably, use of violence would decrease dramatically, and incarceration rates would drop. Communities would be vastly safer due to the investment in meeting the basic needs consistent with Maslow's Hierarchy of needs.

The recent state government announcement of a Foyer for young people in Cairns, is very welcome. Having managed two youth foyer-like programs in Victoria, where we worked with young students. The challenge here is why can't we have an Indigenous specific Foyer program, with funding awarded to an Aboriginal Community Controlled

Organisation, enabling Indigenous community to be part of the solution to Indigenous youth crime.

Only ACCO's like DIYDG, truly understand, the impact of racism and abuse that is hurled at young Indigenous people and their community, daily. That's integral to their approach, understanding and outcomes.

Our Branch wants to be part of the solution, too. We will continue to raise awareness, educate ourselves and others, around the complexities of these issues. We firmly stand with DIYDG, as local allies.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission. It is appreciated.