

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

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FOOTSTEPS
COMMUNITY SERVICES

Submission to the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee

Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform



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Executive Summary

We need to tackle the root cause of children entering the judiciary system and provide the support necessary to prevent the harmful behaviours that individuals with unaddressed trauma may engage in. It is well documented that risk factors like exposure to family violence, parental substance abuse, criminality, low family income, cognitive difficulties, behavioural disorders, and parental mental ill health, can lead children to engage in harmful behaviour and even criminal activity (World Health Organization, 2023).

As an organisation that has provided therapy to young people under the guardianship of Youth Justice and Child Safety for many years, we have found the primary reason that young people turn to criminal groups is their desire for attachment and belonging. Young people often connect with criminal groups and gangs to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance for who they are. This is our golden key to change.

Unfortunately, current solutions focus on the offender in the context of the offence committed, rather than taking a holistic approach which could deliver optimal outcomes for the young person and the wider community. For example, programs and services that focus on creating new opportunities, hope, and an alternative approach to life choices - combined with clear tangible outcomes such as qualifications and career opportunities - will provide the young person with their primary goal of attachment and acceptance in the community and reduce the risk of reoffending.

Youth crime is a community issue that can only be addressed by rebuilding trust and breaking the stigma of being in care or on a court order. For this reason, a solution to address the problem must be community-led. Programs led by peer support workers alongside trained trauma therapists can provide the framework for change with a role modeling approach designed to support young people to reframe their internal identity which had previously been established through adverse experiences.

We can also reduce the community impacts by providing better mental health and case management support to victims of crime.

This submission is based on our own experience of working in the community and outlines the areas where Footsteps sees clear, cost-effective solutions that can be implemented within the current system to improve outcomes.

About Footsteps Community Services

Footsteps is a community services organisation which provides therapy, specialised support coordination, case management, positive behaviour support, accommodation and respite, neurofeedback, community nursing, and other similar services to individuals, families and organisations throughout southeast Queensland and the wider Australian community. Our management team has over 150 years combined industry experience and our clinical directors have more than 40 years combined experience of working with young people in care, both here in Australia as well as in the UK.

Our team includes psychotherapists, psychologists, counsellors, social workers, registered nurses, positive behaviour practitioners, case managers, and support coordinators. Our multidisciplinary team means we can support a wide section of our community by bringing different professional disciplines and perspectives to each case.

For the past 8 years we have provided extensive levels of support to Youth Justice and Child Safety agencies. This includes providers of residential care services and direct therapy services to young individuals. In the past three years, we have provided over 5,000 hours of services within the current system.

Footsteps is a registered National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) service provider and is also registered with multiple other agencies to provide a range of services including therapy, counselling, nursing, and positive behaviour support. We regularly work alongside government departments, agencies, hospitals, and state-backed insurance schemes and engage with clients of all ages, with extensive experience in supporting children, young people, and families. Our holistic, evidence-based approach is focused on empowering and enabling our clients and the individuals we support to strive for a positive future.

1. Term of Reference

Our experience aligns with the two main domains in the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee's term of reference as follows:

- Supporting victims of crime and addressing resulting trauma; and
- Identification of hurdles for young people at risk of entering, or for those who have entered, the youth justice system.

Support to victims of crimes (2.d):

Footsteps' experience in this area is a result of working directly with victims of crime as a registered provider under the Victim Assist program.

To properly support victims of crime, it is important for the trauma to be addressed as soon as possible so that the trauma does not trigger any further hurdles for the victims. The compounding effect of trauma, coupled with underlying or pre-existing conditions can have a lasting and costly impact on the individual and the wider community. It is important that this trauma is addressed through appropriate trauma-informed therapy.

Our experience with Victim Assist has been that the scheme does not identify preferred or recommended suppliers which leaves already struggling victims to source their own support. This hinders the likelihood of individuals finding and receiving support from an appropriate service provider within the optimum time frame.

Furthermore, it would be beneficial for the scheme to provide more direct guidance and support which extends beyond the allocation and management of funding. Indeed, the scheme already has allocated case managers who are focused on managing the allocation funding but who often have a limited understanding of the victim's needs.

Prevention of youth offences (2.a)

At Footsteps, we see the prevention of youth offences as a two-step process:

- Addressing intergenerational trauma & environmental factors; and
- Providing hope and an alternative path for young people currently involved in the system.

The current system focuses on the offence and the offender while unfortunately not addressing the environment and circumstances in which the offender has grown and evolved in. Young offenders will continue to re-offend if they are not provided with an alternative path and opportunities to get out of the system. This must first include clear, achievable outcomes such as employment or further education, as well as the provision of timely psychological support to

ensure ‘self-sabotage’ and other psychological barriers to achievement are overcome for successful outcomes to be reached.

Re-connecting to the community (2.b)

Offenders are often disconnected from the community and that is why the community must be at the core of any recovery efforts.

All of the young people engaged with Youth Justice that we have worked with suffer from attachment disorder due to personal trauma. Whilst there is a disconnect from the community, there are often clear opportunities to re-build self-validation and positive reinforcement through peer connection and role modelling.

Efficacy of current system including residential component (2.c.vii)

Many of the above-mentioned options also have application to improving the efficacy of the entire system. For young people, this may include creating an alternative environment to ensure positive identity formulation. Removing young people from an environment that reinforces the wrong behaviour will sometimes be necessary to improve efficacy of the system, while providing out-of-home support which is tailored to the young person’s needs and addresses the impacts of attachment disorder.

2. Support to Victims of Crimes

Our primary suggestion to enhance support to victims of crimes is to facilitate their direct referral to appropriate support service providers. This could be achieved by providing a list of preferred suppliers or by maintaining an online search database of providers (see for example, the [NDIS providers finder](#)).

With many victims of crime, we have only been able to begin providing therapy services several months after they received funding for therapy. The delay is caused by the difficulties they experience when trying to find a provider that is familiar with the requirements of the Attorney General's office.

From a cost and efficiency perspective, many services are now delivered in a virtual format or via telehealth which often meets the requirements of clients by offering appointments that work around their family and work commitments, thus allowing us to cater for a broader client base at a lesser cost. Including an intake assessment as part of the initial engagement would ensure that risks are properly identified and that when victims need critical or crisis support, they are able to seamlessly access the appropriate support.

Our second suggestion to enhance support for victims of crime in critical cases is to provide case management services embedded with therapeutic support. Our experience is that the case coordination which currently takes place by funding coordinators who are not trained in mental health support is centred only around management of the use of funds. To enhance support, this function should be delegated to case managers who are mental health trained and able to provide mental health support alongside managing the use of funds. As well as enhancing support, this solution would also provide cost savings.

Footsteps has already made recommendations to the QLD Government which have direct application to the issue at hand of addressing access to services through our proposal to provide a Mental Health Case Management Service. Our proposal can be accessed [here](#).

3. Prevention of Youth Offences

Footsteps logical stance is that prevention can only be achieved when services address two key areas and are delivered proactively:

1. A preventive stance that addresses the root cause of the behaviour. This includes environmental factors such as socio-economic, education, intergenerational trauma, and alcohol and other drug (AOD) use. This approach should span the continuum of interventions, programs, and services available via Youth Justice and other relevant government agencies. Unfortunately, the often-disconnected interventions between agencies means that underlying issues are not addressed.
2. A reinforcement approach which provides hope, opportunities and alternatives for young people who are already involved in the system. This should specifically target existing offenders and those at risk of offending.

As outlined above, the current system focuses on the offence and the offender while unfortunately not addressing the environment and circumstances in which the offender has grown and evolved in. Young offenders need to be provided with alternative path/s and opportunities to get out of the system. The first step is to provide clear, achievable opportunities and outcomes such as employment or further education, as well as the provision of timely psychological support to address biological, psychological, environmental, social, and cultural barriers to success.

Example: *We have seen many young offenders trapped in this cycle which has resulted in them being returned to a home environment that requires them to commit criminal activities to help support the family unit such as stealing to pay rent, food, and school clothes for themselves or siblings.*

These young people have requested for help from the Footsteps team, they have asked for us to advocate at court on their behalf by asking to receive a tracking bracelet and be subjected to drug testing which would provide them the opportunity to refuse requests to steal or encouragement to take substances, due to them being monitored. These requests have been refused.

4. Efficacy of the Current System

Our recommendation to improve the efficacy of the current system is targeted towards working with young people currently engaged with Child Safety. Footsteps provided the QLD Government with a proposal for a Trauma-informed Youth Residential Home for young people in care (our proposal can be accessed [here](#)).

Our suggestions include:

- Ensuring that previous recommendations from earlier reviews are fully implemented, specifically around the implementation of a trauma-informed, therapeutic approach. This requires ensuring that all support provided to young people is delivered by a qualified and registered workforce of therapists. Our proposal, while likely being cost-neutral in the medium to long term, would ensure that benefits previously identified are finally delivered to a cohort at risk.
- By addressing the environment, the young person is living in, as well as providing support extending to all stakeholders, our proposal provides the level of direct support needed to improve outcomes for the young person, as well as addressing intergenerational trauma and the environment that caused, triggered, or led to the ensuing problem/s in the first place.

5. Re-connecting to the Community

The vast majority of offenders or young people at risk are too often suffering from trauma and related attachment issues. They are all, to an extent, disconnected from the community and longing for a sense of belonging, recognition, and validation.

In these circumstances, therapy is often ineffective without first implementing a “circle of change” to reset the individual’s identity (to the extent that it has been built on strong negative feelings) and facilitate medium- and long-term progress. A circle of change can be achieved by:

1. **Creating a positive environment** to ensure the young person is not forced to return to the environment which led to their offending and may hamper their effort to re-build;
2. **Creating alternative pathways** such as by facilitating access to employment or educational opportunities; and
3. **Offering hope**, for example, by demonstrating that change and success is possible and achievable with peer mentoring and leadership support delivered by individuals with lived experience in similar situations to provide positive, robust role modelling.

Over the years we have supported and attended court with many young people to provide evidence of our progress and the key factors that many of them request, are:

- Stricter regulations to be placed upon them i.e., ankle monitor, so they have a valid reason not to go out and associate or commit further crimes with their affiliates when they are at the residential facility;
- Drug testing; and
- The opportunity to work in the community for example, to conduct gardening for the elderly because they have had limited contact with older generations.

***Example:** One example we can share is that of a teenage individual who called us over the Christmas period saying they would re-offend to get back to jail to have a Christmas dinner. They were alone and had no connections, with no path to success and a lack of belonging in the community.*

6. Footsteps' Recommended Solutions

Footsteps has provided two proposals to the QLD Government, both of which have direct application to the above-mentioned issues we are experiencing in the community.

In the case of young people in care, our approach is to:

- Address the trauma that young people in care are living with and that triggers their behaviours; and
- Adopt a proactive stance to supporting young people already in care to reduce the risk of offending.

In the case of our mental health case management support, our approach is to:

- Create a link between departments, agencies and service providers to ensure continuity of support;
- Identify areas where support delivers optimal outcomes and replicate the approach where applicable; and
- Provide a proactive and positive environment where mental health hurdles are addressed promptly to avoid future crisis.

Both proposals focus on addressing trauma by providing a person-centric response which is specific to the individual, while at the same time delivering clear and measurable outcomes. When and if possible, Footsteps would seek to further address trauma and mental health challenges with the whole support network including parents, carers, sibling, and extended family to improve individual and community outcomes.

7. Key Facts and Figures

We highlight some key facts and figures to provide context and draw attention to the human and financial costs of the current system:

Youth Justice

- There were **8,030 admissions of children and young people into police watchhouses or stations in Queensland** in 2021-22 with children as young as 10 being detained.
- Exposure to the justice system leads to further trauma, poorer health and **increases the likelihood of reoffending** (Tobin, 2020 in Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).
- On 30 June 2022, **3.8% of young people on a child protection order were also on a youth justice order** (Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).*
 - This figure increased to **5.9% for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people** (Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).*

**NB: this data excluded children and young people remanded in custody or on conditional bail programs - the actual figure is likely to be significantly higher.*
- The average cost per child or young person in detention-based services was **\$2,086 per day** in 2021-22 with 275 children in detention on an average day (Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023), costing approximately **\$183 million per year** (Justice for Reform Initiative, 2022).
- Overwhelming evidence suggests the treatment of children in detention is harmful to those with complex needs (Justice Reform Initiative, 2023).

Child Safety and Out-of-Home Care

- A record **\$2.14 billion** Child Safety budget was announced for 2023/24, with more child safety officers (CSOs) needed to tackle overloaded caseworkers (Queensland Government, 2023).
- **32,000 notifications** were received by Child Safety in a 12-month period (Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).
- **Only 66%** of young people in care aged over 15 years had a transition to adulthood plan in the past 12 months (Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services, 2023 in Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).
- **\$8.249 million was allocated to child protection litigation services** across Queensland between 2016 and 2023 (Department of Justice and Attorney-General, 2017).
- The Queensland Child's Report 2023 reported that in the previous 12 months, **12,000 children** lived in out-of-home care.
- Each child living in out-of-home care costs **between \$487,185 and \$955,880 per year leaver** (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2018)

- The total lifetime costs for young people leaving care are estimated to be **\$738,741 per care leaver** (Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, 2023).
- NAPLAN results are **significantly lower for children in care** than for their counterparts, between:
 - 72.3% and 79.8%, compared to 94.1% to 94.8% for reading; and
 - 66% and 76%, compared to 94.3% to 94.6% for numeracy (Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, 2023).
- **One in three young people are homeless in the first year** after leaving out-of-home care (CREATE Foundation, 2021 in Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).
- **923 children and young people on a child protection order received support from a specialist homelessness service** in 2021-22 (2.1 per 10,000 of the population) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022 in Queensland Family & Child Commission).
- The Government spent **\$168.8 million on homeless services** and \$686.2 million on social housing in 2021–22 for young people and adults combined (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2023 in Queensland Family & Child Commission, 2023).

8. Factors to be Considered in Supporting Young People

The hurdles of many young people known to the Youth Justice system are underpinned by cognitive vulnerabilities related to their exposure to adverse and traumatic events such as trauma, neglect, domestic violence, abuse, and poverty in childhood.

It is imperative that the potential impact of all of these factors are considered in developing support. We can only improve issues with the juvenile detention systems by facilitating access to trauma-responsive support services which are delivered by practitioners with the specific knowledge, experience, patience and understanding required to support these young people.

Exposure to Trauma

Exposure to trauma is common in children known to the justice system and this means that they have unique needs. Healthy physical and mental development relies on safety and stability. Trauma and complex trauma have a devastating effect on a child's physiology, emotions, self-image, relationships with others, ability to think, learn, concentrate, and control impulses. Across the life span, complex trauma is linked to a wide range of problems including addiction, chronic physical conditions, depression, anxiety, self-harming behaviour/s and other psychiatric disorders.

Through trauma therapy, young people are encouraged to learn to recognise and tolerate the strong emotions associated with trauma. This helps to minimise avoidance and other symptoms over time. Young people can also find it reassuring to know that an adult can tolerate their strong emotions without becoming overwhelmed.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Children engaged with the justice system are likely to have been exposed to a range of other factors that can impact their cognitive development. This includes placement instability, antenatal alcohol and substance exposure, poverty, neglect, and pervasive developmental issues.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study has shown that such exposure is associated with a range of adverse physical and mental health outcomes in adulthood and there are long-term social health issues associated with not providing the required levels of support. A person who has experienced 4 or more ACEs (including physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, physical or emotional neglect, incarcerated relatives or substance abuse, mental illness, domestic violence, or divorce within the home) has been found to be:

- 2.2 times as likely to have ischemic heart disease;
- 2.4 times as likely to have a stroke;
- 1.9 times as likely to have cancer;
- 1.6 times as likely to have diabetes;
- 12.2 times as likely to attempt suicide;
- 10.3 times as likely to use injection drugs; and
- 7.4 times as likely to be an alcoholic.

Footsteps has recognised the impact of ACE studies for many years and liaise with the leading researchers in this field of work, [Dr Nadine Burke Harris](#), and [Dr Bessel van der Kolk](#).

Mental Health

Children and young people who have experienced difficult upbringings can experience a variety of mental health problems and conditions including:

- anxiety and depression (often arising from the inability to self-regulate emotions); and
- unhealthy attachment styles (often the result of separation from their primary caregiver, grief and loss, unmitigated pain, abuse, neglect or, other unmet needs).

Most young people entering therapy do not have the words to describe the experiences they have encountered, and they often express feelings through their behaviour. It is for this reason that dedicated therapists with a specific understanding of the young person's experience are necessary - to improve both short- and long-term mental health outcomes.

Cognitive & Behavioural Difficulties

Young people with learning and cognitive difficulties may appear as though they are not complying with instructions, or that they are being wilfully disobedient but the behavioural difficulties of many children and young people involved with Youth Justice are underpinned by cognitive vulnerabilities related to exposure to adverse and traumatic events in childhood.

This is identified as developmental trauma disorder (DTD), which describes the biopsychosocial sequelae of exposure to interpersonal victimisation in childhood. The symptoms of DTD can extend beyond the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (van der Kolk, 2005).

Impairment, in any aspect of any function - whether it be listening, memory, speech, social interaction, emotional regulation, or physical coordination - impacts on a child's ability to learn and we often see the impact of impairment in the way the child behaves. It is for this reason that children under the care of Youth Justice need access to Positive Behaviour Support

Practitioners who work with them on identifying the reasons behind challenging behaviours and supporting them to develop appropriate methods to convey their wants and needs.

Children with Disabilities

Child Safety estimates that approximately 16-20% of children and young people with ongoing child safety intervention are expected to be able to access the NDIS due to their diagnosis of a disability (Department of Child Safety, Seniors, and Disability Services, n.d.) such as autism spectrum disorder. This is also likely to be the case amongst children and young people engaged with the youth justice system.

Young people with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder are more likely to develop mental health problems and often experience stress and anxiety caused by their difficulty in dealing with change and unpredictable situations. Behavioural problems, including oppositional defiance disorder (ODD) and aggression, are also common. As individuals with disabilities such as autism spectrum disorder often have difficulty understanding and communicating their own feelings these problems may not be picked up and adequately addressed without appropriate support in childhood.

Learning & Education

When a child has been exposed to abuse, neglect, or trauma the brain cannot develop strong neural pathways. The impact is dramatic, can affect their ability to learn and can be life-long.

In many cases, educators are unaware of a child or young person's experiences. They may see inattention, daydreaming, disorganisation, "messy" work or personal habits, poor memory or time management, difficulty with social interaction, speech problems, and/or a lack of self-control and label the child as "difficult", "naughty", "a troublemaker", or something similar. This can have a negative effect on a young person's identity and self-belief and mark the start of a downward spiral.

It is for this reason that we focus on strategies such as positive language, neurofeedback, and neuroplasticity to monitor and create new neural pathways to support learning and education. This is coupled with the support we provide to specifically target learning, cognitive and behavioural difficulties.

Indigenous & Culturally Diverse Children

A lack of cultural connection can have devastating impacts on a child and indeed an individual's sense of belonging and identity. With Indigenous adults overrepresented in the criminal justice system, supporting the cultural identity of children in the Youth Justice system is crucial to improve their lifetime outcomes (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021).

9. Supporting Necessary Reforms

Overall, services must focus on proactively minimising the likelihood (and associated costs) of offending and emergency interventions. Footsteps can support necessary reforms by delivering positive outcomes where other services are struggling, including by:

- Providing ongoing support to young people (and their parents and/or guardians) which is specifically aimed at addressing the contributing factors which led to the child's involvement with youth justice, and minimising the negative outcomes and wide-reaching community impacts associated with unaddressed childhood trauma;
- Creating transition projects with short, sharp interventions aimed at supporting young people to reconnect with the community and rejoin mainstream services (including school and/or access to qualifications or employment, as appropriate);
- Maximising support in cases of early intervention whereby there are less behavioural hurdles and as a result, less chances of recidivism to protect the broader community;
- Focusing on delivering outcomes for the young people engaged with the system, including by building resilience and creating hope, opportunities, and alternative pathways; and
- Ensuring consistency and continuity of the services available to maximise efficiency, efficacy, resource allocation and return on spend for the Government.

Conclusion

Our aim, and the aim of the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee must be to facilitate and improve access to the support services required to meaningfully address the impacts of trauma and minimise the impacts on our community. For victims of crime, this means making it quicker and easier for them to identify appropriate support providers and providing them with enhanced case management support delivered by professionals with mental health training to minimise the impacts of the trauma.

For young people known to Youth Justice, addressing the trauma of these children and young people is paramount to reducing their likelihood of reoffending in adolescence and adulthood, improving their lifetime outcomes, and minimising the impact on the community. Supporting young people already involved in the justice system, or at risk to be, to choose a different path is possible with a well-rounded, holistic approach to therapeutic and positive behaviour support which addresses their environment, trauma, and triggers, and provides hope, coupled with tangible employment and/or education opportunities.

A proactive and early intervention approach which integrates multidisciplinary support services delivered by highly trained and experienced professionals is required to enact change. Reform will only be effective with full collaboration across community and government. This includes across the justice system and corrective services, child safety and protection, victim assistance, housing and homelessness, healthcare and mental health, employment, education, family support, and drug and alcohol services.

Using the approaches outlined in this document and our recent proposals, we can improve outcomes and deliver monetary and resource savings which can be used to focus on preventative and proactive services.

We welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you have or provide any further details you require.

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Summary *of* Proposals

Footsteps Community Services

A summary of our proposals and recommendations to deliver improved outcomes across youth residential care, youth justice, and mental health in Queensland.



+61 (0) 467 374 123



[View full proposal](#)



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Our Proposal to Deliver Improved Outcomes across the Youth Residential Care Sector

Our trauma-informed youth residential care homes offer a reformed approach to reduce the impacts of children in out of home care.

Our holistic approach of supporting both children in care, and their parents/guardians and family members is a significant factor to change. Our early intervention program incorporates therapy, nursing, positive behaviour support and neurofeedback, delivered by trauma-informed practitioners.

With appropriate support, our reformed approach offers benefits for many areas of our community and government, improving lifetime outcomes and reducing public funding needs across child safety, education, physical and mental health, youth justice, police and corrective services, housing, and economic productivity.

Our biopsychosocial approach directly addresses the impacts of exposure to trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences, mental health considerations, disabilities and learning difficulties, cognitive and behavioural difficulties, and cultural factors.

Key Elements of our Approach



Consider all factors which impact the level and type of support needed for children in out-of-home care.



Very early intervention with multidisciplinary support services for both the child and their family.



Continuous support for the child and their support network for 12 months after leaving one of our Homes.

Key Benefits

Improved outcomes for children, whilst in care, after care and into adulthood:

Improve individual lifetime outcomes across all key areas

Reduce the intergenerational impacts of trauma

Increase community engagement in adulthood

Support for cognitive and behavioural difficulties

Improved outcomes across the residential care system and wider community:

Reduce public spending across all impacted areas

Reduce re-reporting to child safety and residential care

Reduce crime and detention in adolescence and adulthood

Improve community safety, wellbeing and productivity

[View full proposal](#)



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Improving Mental Health Outcomes with Person-Centred Case Management

A summary of our proposal to deliver person-centred case management, in line with Recommendation 18 of the QLD Parliament Mental Health Select Committee in its June 2022 report.

Person-centred case management is needed to minimise the impacts of psychosocial disabilities, mental ill health and alcohol and other drugs (AOD) misuse, and ensure that funding is used in the most effective manner to support better outcomes.

Our case management service provides individuals receiving funding from government agencies - including housing, corrective services, and unemployment - with a dedicated case manager to connect them to the support they need to take control of their circumstances and address the impacts of mental ill health across all facets of their life.

Our early intervention and prevention approach to supporting individuals before their needs increase is designed to maximise the impact of funding, improve support outcomes and reduce long term reliance on public-funded services.

With support provided to each individual for an initial 6 month period, we offer a reformed approach to the current system of short, siloed support services which are difficult to navigate and often unable to meaningfully address complex mental health needs.

Our case managers (supported by Footsteps' team of nurses, therapists, social workers, and positive behaviour support practitioners) utilise nationally recognised assessment models to identify the level of support required. By combining our client knowledge with our in-depth experience of working with government agencies and external providers, we are able to facilitate a truly person-centred support service, with transparent collaboration across all government agencies to achieve optimum outcomes for affected individuals, government, and the community as a whole.

Key Benefits

Improved outcomes for individuals experiencing mental ill health:

Facilitate access to diagnostics assessments & support services

Improve reach & impact of support services & funding

Reduce out-of-pockets costs for crucial support services

Improve individual lifetime outcomes across all key areas

Improved outcomes for the government and wider community:

A singular solution to improved mental health outcomes

Increased ROI across relevant areas of public spending

Reduce barriers to access for at-risk communities

Alleviate long-term reliance on public funding and services

Improve community safety, wellbeing and productivity

View full submission



FOOTSTEPS
COMMUNITY SERVICES

A Summary of our Submission to the Youth Justice Reform Select Community: Inquiry into Youth Justice Reform

Our submission to the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee was requested due to our organisation's experience of working with young people in the community. We outline the areas where Footsteps sees clear, cost-effective solutions that can be implemented within the current system to improve outcomes.

Improving Youth Justice Outcomes

For young people known to Youth Justice, addressing their trauma and circumstances is paramount to reducing their likelihood of reoffending in adolescence and adulthood, improving their lifetime outcomes, and minimising the impact on the community.

Supporting young people to choose a different path is possible with a well-rounded, holistic approach to therapeutic and positive behaviour support, coupled with community-led peer support programs which addresses their environment, trauma, and triggers, and provides hope, coupled with tangible employment and/or education opportunities.

Improving Support for Victims

For victims of crime, we must make it quicker and easier for them to identify appropriate support services and providing them with enhanced case management support. This is needed to ensure that victims receive the support needed to minimise the impacts of trauma within the optimum time frame.

This could be achieved by providing a list of preferred suppliers or by maintaining an online search database of providers, such as the [NDIS providers finder](#), and by implementing a case management service delivered by professionals with mental health training.

Our aim, and the aim of the Youth Justice Reform Select Committee must be to facilitate and improve access to the support services required to meaningfully address the impacts of trauma and minimise the impacts on our community.

A proactive and early intervention approach which integrates multidisciplinary support services delivered by highly trained and experienced professionals is required to enact change. Reform will only be effective with full collaboration across community and government. This includes across the justice system and corrective services, child safety and protection, victim assistance, housing and homelessness, healthcare and mental health, employment, education, family support, and drug and alcohol services.

To discuss our proposals or submission, please contact:

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