

**Submission
No 26**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

Name: Miss Erika-Lee O'Reilly

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Dear Committee Members

Following on from the years of COVID lockdowns and restrictions, many community groups or youth organisations in our area have not returned or if they have, only to a limited capacity. This lack of youth specific spaces and youth targeted activities in the community is just one of the driving factors of youth crime in our area. There is an over reliance on Correctional measures in retaliation to youth crime when what our communities desperately need is intervention and prevention strategies that acknowledge the influence of social and economic factors as drivers of youth crime. A comprehensive approach to addressing youth crime that acknowledges the overarching factors in an individual's life that might influence or contribute to these behaviours, is necessary. Providing spaces that are free and easily accessible to young people as well as developing and improving the funding of existing youth specific services in areas such as domestic and family violence, homelessness, and mental health care, are just some of the ways I believe my communities young people would be better supported. I believe that intervention and prevention strategies should be prioritised when attempting to address youth crime in our regional and rural communities, and that any action without addressing the need for support services and social services is counterproductive. As I struggle to see any decline in youth crime within regional and rural NSW without addressing the factors in an individual's life that are direct causes.

Thank you for your time.