

**Submission
No 166**

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Date Received: 3 June 2024

I wish to mainly address the first element of the Inquiry. as I do not have enough knowledge to address the other terms of Reference. However, I have observed the Community over a very long period of time in my eldership.

a) the drivers of youth crime across regional and rural NSW, particularly since the COVID pandemic;

I propose that the COVID Pandemic, much in itself has been a major driver of youth crime.

Kids were sent home into stressful environments. They experienced fear of a disease that was killing thousands. Parents losing employment and then received windfalls with Govt policies. Alcohol and drug use increased with pornography and gambling. Housing costs were under stress. Domestic Violence increased with kids not being able to escape. Governments were ineffective in most Leadership requirements.

We were like a 'Deer in the Headlights 'and we still are. The trauma that kids experienced has not been recognised or addressed in a collective way.

I don't believe the connections have been made to this threat to community safety.

The effect of the above is now being manifest the collective community.

Overview:

- 1. The loss of safety and security.**
- 1. The loss of continuity of education**
- 2. The change to environments. Home, School, sports, recreation, entertainment, friends.**
- 3. The insecurity of employment and income of parents.**
- 4. The loss of casual work for kids.**
- 5. The loss of peer group interactions**
- 6. The loss of secure teacher interactions and support in the learning environment.**
- 7. Crowded housing with stressed parents working from home.**
- 8. The political failure to recognise the severe social implications of the Covid Pandemic as trauma.**
- 9. The political failure to learn from the Covid Pandemic and create a wholistic integrated plan centred on children and families for Healing and moving forward.**
- 10. The power of criminal organisations using social media to organise and mobilise disenfranchised youth as a reality.**
 - a) In providing any authoritative voice for them to follow, they follow. Andrew Tate is an example, a horrible example.
 - b) If one is to get real, in this inquiry about crime and recidivism, crime escalation may well be about 'initiation' into a culture of crime and becomes one of belonging for these young men. It's happening in a negative way, behind the scenes on the Internet.
 - c) Society needs to understand the phenomenon and then build on a real culture of inclusion and participation in a positive way.
- 12 Unless we commit to a full exploration of these phenomena, the radicalisation of generations through social media, it may well have the power to destroy Democracy as we know it.**
 - a. I makes these observations.

- i. The rise of the popularity of Nazism and the Far-Right Movement worldwide.
- ii. The increase of violence towards women and their subsequent murders.
- iii. The increase in organised crime such as gangs, using children to carry out those crimes.
- iv. The Political gamesmanship used to incite racism.
- v. The dulling down of Free to Air Broadcasting and the unwillingness to challenge the power of the Murdoch Empire's influence to radicalise.
- vi. The power of the internet to corrupt through access to pornography, gambling and radicalisation.
- vii. The inability of our own government to demand the freedom of Assange due to the hierarchical positioning with the United States. (Parent/Child paradigm pattern). This send signals to youth that standing up is a crime.
- viii. The inadequacy of Governments of all levels to understand and prepare for AI and the ramifications it has for future Elections, the easy manipulation and mobilisation of disenfranchised youth.

13 The loss of Trust in every system;

- a. Government.
- b. Health.
- c. Education.
- d. Justiciary
- e. Family.
- f. Church, Religion and Spirituality
- g. Sport.
- h. The ARTS
 - i. The explosion of Experts, conspiracy theorists and Influencers on social media feeding ignorance and doubt and 'a following' (*If one were to doubt that power, consider the rise of singer/songwriter Taylor Swift*)
 - ii. Social Media and Artificial Intelligence.
 1. The Misinformation and Disinformation
 2. The manipulation of young minds
 3. The manipulation of markets.
 - iii. The feeling of not belonging through isolation which is creating radicalisation.
 - iv. The inadequacy of education to understand our democratic system and thus leadership in Federal and State and local Governments is falling short for our young people.

b) how a whole of government approach can reduce the drivers and root causes of youth crime in regional and rural NSW;

The root cause is covered in, 12 and 13 above:

The result is disenfranchisement of two generations who don't see a future for themselves in Australia, no matter what race they belong to.

A WHOLE OF COMMUNITY APPROACH IS REQUIRED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT.

It appears Racism has escalated since the Referendum and governments on all levels have their heads in the sand about it.

Racism is very real in Australia and enables an easy manipulation through to anti-semitism. In denying it we cannot go anywhere.

We have a culture that is embedded in football where we seemingly MUST choose a side. Politics plays this system effectively manipulating a disengaged uneducated population into ugly representation of win/lose. Pick your side.

Most white Australians only hear racism as a word, its not an experience until you belong to the side that tells you, you belong.

c) the wraparound and diversionary services available for youth and families in the regions and rural areas and how they can be better matched to individuals, measured, improved and integrated into a coordinated approach to divert youth from crime, having regard to the NSW Government's commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people;

FUNDING, FUNDING, but intelligent FUNDING.

There is nothing for these kids unless it's in sport.

Backtrack identified this problem and found a way to divert these kids from crime in training dogs to perform high jumping at shows. Taking them out of town for the weekend. It worked for quite a while until it didn't.

Social media and peer group pressure can change a program like that in seconds. Once the Influencer says its not cool, its not.

Understanding why kids turn to crime is the first step:

Why don't we ask them?

Boredom

Excitement

Belonging

Rebelling

Peer Group Pressure

Hungry and cold.

Isolated.

SOLD a drug solution.

d) staffing levels and workforce issues, including police staffing, in regional and rural areas and how services can be improved to reduce youth crime in these areas;

- 1. An integrated fully trained workforce is needed to work with a fully funded Police Force working together in all communities.**
- 2. Continual cuts to services by Governments brings uncertainty to planning and supports the Silo system. It becomes horribly sabotaging.**
- 3. Planning far enough ahead to encompass at least one generation if not two is essential therefore guaranteeing the funding for that length of time.**

Training in the area of servicing could be created in an integrated educational environment with a restructure of TAFE or creation of 'fit for purpose training colleges', where the learning environment connects into each other in a wholistic learning environment.

All these areas are underfunded and because they operate in silos. They don't use resources well. We only seem to see money as resources and yet the social capital is not addressed clearly when we look at new systems as the old systems continue to break down.

To embrace new systems, we have to be able to plan them outside of the old systems. If we fail to do that, we put pressure on the old systems and they collapse like a rusty tank.

e) recidivism rates in regional and rural areas, and related impacts on the community, services and law enforcement;

JUSTICE SYSTEM in the local area is often considered **SOFT** on crime.

Magistrates are often considered soft and community feelings are perpetrators are let off to just go and do it again. This is where Circle Sentencing has been effective with adults but it's not used with youth crime. It shouldn't be simply up to Indigenous Elders to perform in this space. We have a Jury System in this country and that could even be expanded into Circle Sentencing where volunteers of the wider community be invited to participate. Justice System, Police and Community Corrections.

I understand, everyone is trying to keep incarcerations down but if Offenders are not supervised and accountable, the system breaks down. It needs these 3 arms of the Justice System to be working together rather than it falling down like a one- or two-legged chair.

If firmer sentences were then supervised in a tighter collaborative format, Offenders would be less likely to offend. Once any of the directives break down, the offender is aware of the consequences and assured they will be carried out. This would avoid an antagonistic environment where Police check on offenders when they have a quiet time and this could be 3am, so they go bashing on doors and waking up neighbours.

Accountability on both sides of the table must be respectful, deliberate and always with consequences for non-conformance.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND CIRCLE SENTENCING

I recently sat in on an information meeting about Circle Sentencing in my local Community of Armidale given by Fiona Lovelock in the Local Court. Apart from this system only being available for adult offenders who have been referred by a Magistrate it is not available for young offenders. A number of Aboriginal Elders sit on the panels and the process has 98% success rate without anyone reoffending.

No-one gets paid to sit on that panel. That's incomprehensible to me that such a program is supported by volunteers. I am aware these Elders would not necessarily want to be paid but regardless the cost/benefit, is therefore not in any way realistic for it to extend into the wider community.

f) the range of functions being performed by NSW police officers, including mental health assistance and youth welfare, on behalf of other agencies in regional and rural areas, and the supports required to assist police; and

The use of police in this way is completely unsustainable. I am aware that there is so much understaffing that the triage process happens and mistakes can be made at this point.

I believe that police do minimal training in cross cultural awareness and that should become a process developed with Aboriginal leaders and Elders. In this way respect would be built as further educational tool in breaking down prejudice, bigotry and racism.

g) any other related matter

All these areas are underfunded and they operate in silos, therefore elements are repeated across the board creating expenditure that is unnecessary. Resources are not shared. We only seem to see money as resources and yet the social capital is not addressed when we look at new systems as the old systems continue to break down.

To embrace new systems, we have to be able to plan them outside of the old systems. If we fail to do that, we put pressure on the old systems and they collapse like a rusty tank.

I understand, Aboriginal cultural systems are completely opposite to the Governance we inherited from the colonial powers. My understanding being, the democratic system is linear, top down hierarchical and patriarchal.

I've experienced the Aboriginal system of Governance and law being circular where people come together with equal voice and equal right to resources and support. They are also heard equally within gender. Decisions are arrived at through exploration, discussion and consensus.

Elders guide the process but do not control. Where there is dispute that is unresolvable, Law men and Women decide on the direction taken or punishment.

The two systems can be thoroughly delimited by the premise of 'OWNERSHIP'

I hope this Inquiry will address these issues.