

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS

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Telephone:
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Theme:

Summary

MACARTHUR GREENS

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The Director,
Standing Committee on Social Issues,
Parliament House,
Macquarie Street.
Sydney 2000

29th October, 2005

Dear Sir/Madam,

We take this opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry into public disturbances in Macquarie Fields earlier this year. These events are certainly worthy of an inquiry, because the issues are not confined to Macquarie Fields, but relate to many areas of public housing.

These areas are inhabited often by the most disaffected members of our society. It is well known that the problems that resulted in the events to which this inquiry refers are widespread and not easy to resolve. We understand this, and have some empathy for those whose responsibility it is to address the problems. We wish, therefore, to restrict our comments to the way in which services in our public housing communities are funded.

Several difficulties arise with current approaches to funding.

1. Often the same type of service is provided by several different agencies, all funded from different sources.
2. Often successful services are defunded after their initial funding period has ceased. The service then folds, often to be started from scratch after a gap of some years.
3. Often unsuccessful services are funded, despite the futility of continuing. No provision is made to transfer such funds to other programmes which are more appropriate.

None of these approaches supports sustainable programmes with prospects of any long term ability to effect change.

Our fervent hope is that a change to the way funding of services can occur to embrace:

1. Coordination of service provision, to avoid duplication.
2. Recurrent funding to ensure the ongoing provision of successful services.
3. Transfer of funding when it is clear that money could be better used.

Lack of coordination, together with inconsistency, will derail any attempts to provide appropriate services in these areas of high need. We particularly support early intervention programmes in order to address problems before they exacerbate through failed schooling and employment experiences, leading frequently to jail – and to the sorts of outcomes we saw in Macquarie Fields earlier this year. More particularly, we believe it is essential to have a sustainable, long-term, wholistic approach to service delivery.

Yours faithfully

Julie Bourke.

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