

The Future of Perth

I am a young person residing in Perth, who has experienced living on the streets. Although I have never committed a serious crime, I was always a trouble maker, labelled a pest' by city police for stirring them up. As a result, I was locked up in detention for a few days with the most serious of my crimes perhaps being chased by police because I was bored and wanted some fun.

I currently study Year 11 at Cyril Jackson Senior Campus and I plan to be a Youth Worker as unlike some Youth Workers, I have experienced what non-mainstream young people are going through. Many people know me as the crazy BMX chick riding down James Street every Friday and Saturday night.

I have many ideas for Perth which includes Northbridge, juvenile crime and youth issues. My focus is more specifically on non-mainstream people residing in or near Perth City. I am seeking ideas from the Public, their response, comments and support, as the government appears to not care, otherwise they would seek the Public's help to solve issues that affect them. Although some of the included information deals with other States particularly New South Wales, the situations have a lot in common with Western Australia and have been included as a reference to look at what the situation is really like. We are not alone in this, obviously, and by you understanding the statistics and problems that kick-off juvenile crime, drugs or whatever the issue is, we may find it easier to look at solutions that could work.

Some of the below processes are already in place with mainstream youths but the difficulties arise for young people who are homeless and living in disadvantaged environments. These young people have not been exposed to situations where they can be constructive with their life or have not been ruled by discipline and don't care if they turn up for their work order or

not. It's a difficult one to change. Young people who continue to offend, need to be found to be able to carry out the work order and placed in a heavily regulated hostel. They feel hopeless and don't think there's any way out of the situation, so they are disempowered by the system. There are many sanctions in place for non-law abiding citizens. There will always be a section of people who will never be law abiding and will always break the law because they can, which doesn't mean we shouldn't try and find an alternative to curing the deviance. They need to be heavily supported to find accommodation, employment, education etc. For anyone to really change, you've got to change the family. Kids are born into the family, not shaped or anything. By the time they're seven years old, their personality is moulded. By the time they are 25 - 30, it is harder for them to change because this is the life and attitude they are accustomed to.

Many kids like to live on the streets, run amok, run from the cops, have unprotected sex, used drugs, drink everyday and fight because they prefer to not be at home or home may not be a safe place. The violence is usually stemmed from family life, rather than peer pressure. They're taught that violence is okay, it's accepted as normal but when they come to the city, the community sees it as wrong. There are the anger issues that need tackling - instead of young people beating people up, they should be helped to get into boxing where they can use their skills, channel their bad into good, use a boxing bag or given a boxing course. They need a legal outlet to take away the crime.

Some family backgrounds are good but young people start doing things that aren't so positive. Community Education could be set up through schools. We cannot force parents and kids to go to counselling to learn parenting skills. There are a lot of counselling services out there but they don't want to talk about their issues, even if it's a free service. We will always have parents who are really bad and kids will be taken away and end up as State Ward. Abuse

and neglect are obvious to agencies.

Headings:

1. Juvenile Crime
2. The Curfew
3. Aboriginals
4. Homelessness
5. The City
6. Drugs

1. Juvenile Crime

Many young people I know are in and out of Rangeview constantly because they think it's a fun place, they need a change from living in squats and it offers more in there than the outside does. It offers a sense of security, hot showers, warm beds, good food, education, entertainment, someone to look after them and a boarding-school environment. At times, it becomes more fun than freedom.

Reported factors associated with offending juveniles :

School - truancy, disruptive behaviour in class, poor achievement / education, dropping out of school, suspension, expulsion. Social Issues - Having no money, unemployed, homeless, drug usage, peer pressure, poverty, social inequality. Attitude - Tolerance, acceptability of crime as something normal, opportunity, need or desire for fun and excitement, retaliation or revenge, curiosity, anger, resentment, boredom, frustration. Other - Need for transport, lack of parental supervision or responsibility, need of parental attention, broken family.

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics 1995/96

- Nearly half of secondary school students commit at least one crime every year but less than 1% are caught.
- Students who often truant, drank heavily and used cannabis, were most at risk of committing crimes and assault. (5)

WA Ministry of Justice 1998/99

- 22,000 charges were finalised, a slight increase on the preceding year.
- 13% of these charges were referred to Juvenile Justice Teams.

Most young people who have been in contact with the justice system are males. "Girls are less likely to commit criminal offences, particularly violent offences. Approximately 90% of young people in detention are boys. It has been estimated that between 80-90% of girls in detention have experienced sexual abuse or incest and girls who are State wards are 40 times more likely to be detained in custody than other girls".

"Indigenous young people are over 18 times more likely to be in detention than non-indigenous young people".

Statistics studying 52,000 young offenders who appeared before the Children's Court between January 1986 to December 1994 :

1. 86% of offences for which young people appear before the Children's Court, are non-violent crimes (eg. Break and enter, motor vehicle theft, stealing and public order offences).
2. It is not typical for young people to graduate from non-violent to violent crime.
3. There is a strong relationship between more severe punishment and higher levels of re-

offending.

(Hot Topics - NSW Legal Information Access Centre)

Major study of 1,100 Brisbane adolescents by the Queensland University

"Young people from a family environment who committed property crimes, had the same access to expensive consumer goods, such as personal computers and CD players as the rest of the community. What they lacked was access to community swimming pools, youth clubs, cinemas and good public transport. Youngsters stole, not because they lacked material goods at home but because they lacked the facilities that State and local governments could provide"

"A Perth shopping centre management confronted with a high level of vandalism, employed a youth worker and held rock concerts and other events for young people. Within six months, their shoplifting figures improved "remarkably" and vandalism diminished". (4)

Community Service Orders

Most juveniles hate community service work and I was one of them. Would you prefer having to sweat it out under the hot sun and having to work hard? Or get to relax in a fun-filled boarding-school environment playing PlayStation, soccer, jumping on trampolines, working out in the gym, eating fantastic large meals at no cost to you and watching videos and TV all weekend? Detention is the easiest option, therefore there is no reason why young people shouldn't commit a crime. What's a couple of nights locked up and a caution going to do in the end?

By carrying out community service work, young people are not exposed to a criminal environment and instead, come away with very useful work and life skills. Cautions should be abolished for juveniles who have attended court once before and be given a minimum of ten hours community service for their crime, as mild as it may be. Police could also be given the

power to require a young person to perform community work as an alternative to arresting a young person and taking the matter to court or for instant on-the-spot infringements. This could allow a young person to be 'punished' for their actions without getting a criminal record and free up more police time. The Juvenile Justice Team or another agency would still need to be involved. The police, who earn money from the fines, could find an alternative for revenue.

Useful Community Work

Local Government Councils could be encouraged to participate by supervising young people on socially useful community projects although there would still be the need for a referral to another agency to follow it up if the young person fails to attend. They could be given jobs like painting fences, removing graffiti, lawn mowing, picking up litter, gardening and other useful tasks. The money the Council saves from this free labour, could be put towards local area youth and drug initiatives.

Most young offenders will require support from a youth or social worker during and after their community service work order to reduce the likelihood of re-offending. The support worker could provide direction (or case management) with regard to finding employment or staying in education, getting access to safe and secure accommodation, finding support in dealing with drug addiction or other problems, or just to be someone there for the young person to talk to. One of the goals the community could reach through community service, is to make Perth the cleanest city in Australia. Tourism would benefit and so would our attitudes. Apparently this is already taking place through the Juvenile Justice Team but more always needs to be done.

Offenders who refuse to complete their community work order, could be made to wear fluoro orange overalls (which becomes an issue of controversy). If they still refuse, they could be sent to work on farms or environmental projects. Many camps like these are forced to close due to

financial constraints but if this camp was to be well established with a funding that was created by the juvenile's work, then this would not be a problem. Accommodation would be basic and these young people could learn self-reliance and life skills such as washing their clothes, keeping their residence clean and cooking their own meals. Mutual obligation isn't liked but it works well because it gives people skills but some people don't like doing it and either force themselves to a job or into crime. A lot of citizens may not agree with it but it's people's money paying for it. Human rights comes into conflict where they say "you can't make people do that kind of stuff". A negative aspect would include the distance family would have to travel to visit the young person.

"Unemployed youth form a large proportion of the total unemployed population. In 1994, of the 855,500 unemployed people, 38% were aged 15-24. 54% of these unemployed youth were men"
(4)

Perhaps young people need more access to work and be given longer community work orders with the last half being paid work.

Kurli Murri

This was a 36 km work camp in Laverton in 1995 (now closed), costing \$1.76 million. It was designed for hardened juveniles between the ages of 16 to 21, enforcing a rigorous exercise and physical work program. It consisted of demountable buildings, 15 double-bunked rooms, classroom, kitchen, staff accommodation and self-use laundry. To be sent there, offenders were not to have previously served prison sentences or committed serious offences like violent or sex crimes. This camp did not require youth to be locked in their rooms or fenced in the compound. After the closure, some young people were involved in the Windarra rehabilitation project in the local area. (3)

WA Youth Program - Roebourne Police & Citizens Youth Club

More than 140 children attended movies regularly in Roebourne, organised by the local PCYC. On one night there was a cancellation due to technical problems with the video player, crime rose 100%. In 2001, the 27's PCYC clubs' activities were attended by more than 412,000 young people, according to an article published by The West Australian on 30 May 2002. Unfortunately, it proves that young people are relying on the community to entertain them and that adults are there to find them something to do, perhaps the reason why Northbridge has many problems.

WA Youth Program - U-Turn

Young car thieves between the ages of 14-17, are taking part in a course that teaches them the basics of car maintenance, which also includes numeracy and literacy training. The article, which was published in The West Australian on Friday 10 October 2003, encourages them to steer away from crime but continuing to maintain their interest in cars. It runs five days a week at a Northbridge location between 9 am to 4 pm, providing an opportunity for further education and employment and is expected to trial for two years.

WA Youth Program - Safe Street

A program was launched on Thursday 25 September 2003 to curb young drivers' illegally street racing. The \$100,000 program is organised by the WA Police, Kwinana Quit Motorplex and State and Local government, according to an article published in The West Australian on Wednesday 24 September 2003.

Local at youth risk drivers between the ages of 15-25, are referred to the program by Cockburn traffic police, Juvenile Justice Teams and council social workers. They can then watch

or take part in weekly drags at the Kwinana Complex.

SA Youth Program - Project Street Legal

Roger Welsh created a South Australian project called Street Legal in 1989. Young people were saying they wouldn't steal cars if they had their own. The program began with renting a shed, buying an old Torana that had been hit by a truck and letting juveniles aged 14-18, who had been sent there through a court order after stealing cars, build their own drag car. Eventually they were able to race against the police at the Adelaide International Raceway. It was an outstanding success. Police would drop in, in their own time to help work on the cars and talk to the kids. (3)

VIC Youth Program - Operation Cog

Police organised fun and recreation for eleven Aboriginal car theft offenders every Friday night at the local sports centre from October 1990. All juveniles were caught as the result of the Operation. They were given curfews, made to attend school and given a case worker. The program was very successful but lasted 12 months due to funding and other problems. (3)

- Zero tolerance is needed for juvenile crime.

2. The Curfew

In the last few months, there has been a lot of media publicity on the juvenile curfew in Northbridge. Statistics suggests that there is an increase of incidents of young people or juveniles with problematic behaviours in the Northbridge area. Juveniles come in to congregate with their friends and sometimes clash with rival groups. Although some do not pose as a threat to patrons, others are drunk or have been sniffing substances, therefore their behaviour becomes uncontrollable and Northbridge patrons cannot enjoy themselves and may find themselves victims of crime.

Politicians appear to have no interest in seeking the public's opinion in what should be done to solve youth and crime issues that take place in Perth. Instead, they make the decisions for us. We need to find an incentive for young people under the age of 16 (or 18) to take the train by 12 am on Saturday and Sunday mornings that Westrail, the Police, Railway Special Constables, Noongar Patrol and youth workers could support.

Young people like to hang around the city and Northbridge because it's fun, they want to see what goes on and all their friends are there - especially at night. It's where the action is (considering there's not really anything in the suburbs to do). Perth needs more youth entertainment during the weekend, perhaps not in the heart of Northbridge but further away to discourage them from an area of adult entertainment. Young people will come in, no matter what the government throws at them. What ever happened to the City of Perth's plans for youth friendly space?

3. Aboriginals

When the Government sinks the Railway line, instead of building another China town, the Government needs to build an Aboriginal town/community. It could consist of kitchens with Noongars serving up traditional cooking, constant live music and entertainment, a small outdoor cinema showing Aboriginal films, workshops to build boomerangs and didgeridoos in front of the public, throwing boomerang and playing didgeridoo teaching, art gallery and live artists and a Noongar language school.

There is so many cultural places in Northbridge and the city for foreign communities but apart from the Yirra Yaakin Noongar Theatre, there's almost nothing for the Aboriginals. They need their own space, at least one they can share with the public. For the moment, the

Government should consider using the old Go Kart shed near the Perth Train Station. The public may have some worries, as there's a car park lot in front of it and people may worry about the safety of their cars. But for now, nothing is being done about the non-mainstream homeless Aboriginal people drinking in the city during the day. We need something that can stimulate their motivation as an alternative to social problems, and a better placement in society.

Noongar Sporting Teams

We could organise sporting groups with the first team being football for Noongar city children and young people to develop their skills. Hopefully it would be followed by basketball, cricket, soccer and athletics. There could be three levels. The first level being the normal participation you find everywhere in sporting clubs. The second would be with extra privileges if they continue their schooling and don't regularly truant. The third level could offer more privileges or incentives for a week or a month. Being involved in sport can be a good outcome for life. We could encourage them to stop drinking and using drugs but it's more of an internal control. They would be able to play against other teams and the logo, uniform and club name would be decided by them. Police could help with these clubs to further their relationships with Aboriginal youth as currently, it appears to be very poor, particularly in the city.

VIC Koori Jail Program

The Dooligar Justice Centre is a \$1 million centre built in 1992 for Aboriginal offenders. It is run by Aboriginal staff and aimed at keeping Aboriginals out of prison by being culturally relevant, offering personal development programs, cultural camps, basic accommodation for offenders on community orders and counselling. Offenders were encouraged to serve community-based or intensive correction orders by working among Aboriginal communities. (2)

On the otherhand, aspects that should be questioned, would be 'Is it financially viable, does it encourage separateness? Do we want to encourage inclusion and live as one?'

NSW Aboriginal Circle Court

There was a trial in Wagga Wagga for Aboriginal repeat offenders to appear in a Circle Court as an innovative and creative way of dealing with offences, instead of the normal court procedures. This involves the Police Prosecutor, Judge, Tribal Elders, Defence Lawyer, Victim and anyone else normally involved and they would sit around a circle table to discuss the offence. The program had some success, although not much is known about it, as Paul from the Street Doctor wasn't too sure on the facts. He saw a Police Prosecutor being interviewed on TV, who was saying he was astounded so far and these procedures had changed his attitude. The government was planning to trial a Circle Court in Dubbo.

VIC Aboriginal Court

An Aboriginal Magistrate Court opened in Shepparton for a two year trial in 2002. Attorney-General Rob Hulls stated in The West Australian (published 7 September 2002) that "Indigenous Victorians are 11 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-indigenous Victorians, yet sentencing practices do little to reduce the rate of offending". These courts operate like normal, although they have the presence of a Tribal Elder and Aboriginal justice worker for extra support. The system would have the same sentencing options but would have input from local Aboriginal Elders. A second court was planned to open this year in Broadmeadows.

- There needs to be more encouragement for the public and schools to undertake Aboriginal studies.
- Noongars could have their own court within the metropolitan areas
- Police need to improve their relationships with Aboriginal youth

- Police should undergo (more) compulsory training in Aboriginal culture.

4. Homelessness

Many homeless people may have a lot of stimulation to live their life on the streets and to commit crimes. Some could benefit from adult education classes held in the safety of local day centres like Trambys or the Ruah Centre. If they were given the opportunity to get out the rut, it would be very beneficial but how do we get them to that first level? Most don't want to do it. Perhaps lobbying for different Centrelink options may work. If we were to offer cooking and budgeting classes - how motivated would they be if they have no place to live? Juveniles are usually happier to run amok during the day and worry about their education once they become an adult, sometimes as early as 16.

5. The City

We need to improve the Perth Cultural Centre and make it more of a pleasant place, perhaps the centre of street entertainment, a live band and fire dancers every Friday and Saturday night. When you walk by it, it's a waste of space and fairly boring. There needs to be more visible art in Northbridge, perhaps with a focus of Perth being the arts capital of Australia. We've got the artists and we've definitely got the space, especially in the Perth Cultural Centre. The walls and the steps could be decorated with artistic themes. James Street needs to be closed off with bollards at the William Street and Lake Street ends every Friday and Saturday night, perhaps between 6 pm to 2 am. This has been done on a number of occasions including New Year's Eve and it makes the area safer and a lot more friendlier to access without the threat of cars. I have seen many people who have been drinking, become hit by a car or come very close to it.

Horse manure from the Police Mounted Section creates a problem when patrons and many city-

goers walk the streets of Northbridge. The police need to consider a way they can continue horse patrols without causing a nuisance to themselves. It is currently very unpleasant as the stench is almost intoxicating and the torment of scraping it off your shoe is worse than dog excrement with the potential to ruin your night.

6. Drugs

We need more creative and innovative approaches to dealing with issues affecting young people particularly with drug and alcohol issues. E.g. approaching it more as a health issue rather than a justice issue. Eg. Dealing with issues of young offenders like family stress, child abuse and homelessness. There has been a lot of talk in the media but no one ever does anything about it. We live in a conservative society where people don't want to try new things and it would cost too much. This is where we need to change the attitudes of the community and the police. It would help to use more of a harmonization approach. E.g. Injecting rooms : Addicts would have better access to clean needles, less chance of ODing, access to drug counsellors and treatment programs.

Drug users should not be sent to jail. If we legalise marijuana, there will be a lot more people without drug convictions, as the marijuana issue will never go away. Juveniles need more drug rehabilitation and counselling services but how much is enough?

The Shorts

- The public and government should seek youth advice to improve the city.
- In a book I once read by a retired WA policeman (I could not find it again), it said that Roe Street once housed brothels with prostitutes being registered with the police so that out-of-town prostitutes could not just pick up work. It was an organised situation, which is what we need as prostitution will only disappear once we get rid of horny men,

which will probably never happen. If prostitutes were given counselling, help with their drug conditions or supporting their child and educated in the dangers -we may be more in sight with a solution that could make everyone happy.

Now is the time to address juvenile crime and to enhance showcases of aboriginal culture and talent. If you feel passionately about the issues outlined within this document, please forward your ideas, comments and support, so together we can create positive changes and make the ideas a reality. Policies need to be endorsed by the government but we as the community can discuss options and structured programs before presenting them to local state government stakeholders. Feel free to print, photocopy, forward or fax this e-mail to anyone you know who would be interested in making these ideas and projects become a reality but please don't change the contents.

Thankyou

Delphine Jamet

Author of Streetkid In The City

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