



Brian Collingburn

177 Queen St.

Adelaide, South

Australia

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SUBMISSION TO  
THE SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
INQUIRY INTO CHILD WELFARE

Dear Senators,

There is one sure way to reduce some antisocial behaviour and mental health costs.

PROVIDE ADEQUATE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

It has been documented that the abuse and neglect of children usually leads to their later inability to fit into the mores of society, but it is only after the damage has been done that society becomes concerned, when they break the law.

If people wish to feel safer in their homes and on the streets they should take preventative measures by insisting on adequate funds and other support for child welfare services that are at present under resourced, short of experienced staff due to overwork and frustration burnout, and with inadequate interest due to failure to recognise that inadequate education, health and child welfare services lead to the much greater social and economic costs of greatly increased crime and drug addiction.

The enclosed papers give more details of the problems.

My justification for my opinions are:

A childhood of instability and abuse (no subsequent criminal convictions)

Close personal contact with damaged children and adults over decades in non-professional situations.

Six years of unskilled factory and building site work.

Six years as secretary of a bayside Life Saving Club.

Forty three years as a associate, then full member of the Victorian Council of Social Service.

Foundation and Life Member of the Fitzroy Legal Service.

Past resource person for a number of self help groups, many members of which had severe damage during childhood.

Hoping That You Will Seriously Consider This Submission

Sincerely

Brian Collingburn,

**DRUG ADDICTION & PRISONS: THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY**  
**STOP THE PRODUCTION LINE OF DAMAGED CHILDREN**  
**SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE COMMUNITY AFFAIRS**  
**COMMITTEE**

PROBLEMS

In any recent year the majority of Australian prisoners have been convicted on charges directly or indirectly related to drug addiction.

Of these many have self medicated for a life which has been unbearable, from the results of school bullying, from physical, mental, emotional, and or sexual abuse by parents, older siblings or other adults, family trauma, racial vilification, mental illness.

As with adequate support, treatment, and ongoing support many such people could be protected from the need for 'self medication', and many others could be cured of addiction to lead socially and financially useful lives the present system is as unjustifiable as it is counterproductive and **unsustainable**, especially as such people often become the parents of children who are in turn damaged.

The drug abuse problem is a health problem, often a mental health problem, able to be exploited for criminal gain because the victims are denied services from a society that has allowed those problems to arise.

Controlling drug abuse requires adequate interdisciplinary resources for dealing with the causes of the problems, most notably child abuse and the failures of Child Welfare, and most urgently resources to help those with both addiction and mental illness.

Although Diazepam type drugs have uses when prescribed, is their use justified to keep women prisoners, who often have addiction from self-medication for their many problems, again usually from childhood abuse, submissive rather than rehabilitated, programmed for return, unassisted and further damaged, to their initial problems, and to unwanted pregnancies, and recidivism. Prisons are a growth industry, with increasing profits and increasing job opportunities.

For well over a century in male prisons the culture of prison guards has been to keep prisoners quiet and submissive by any means; including by providing the most brutal prisoners with young prisoners to rape. Those brutal prisoners in return keep order so that their 'privileges' will continue. Sometimes raped ex-prisoners themselves become rapists to try to reassert their masculinity and vent their anger.

For the last 30 years drugs of addiction have been an additional means of control of abuse victims, the stir crazy, and those previously damaged. Although such drugs are officially banned the bans are less than enforced. Ex-prisoners re-enter society drug dependent, psychologically damaged, anti-social and vengeful.

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However this submission is about possible progress.

There is both precedent and tradition for such progress in Australia, as victims from Mills' murderous 'Dark Satanic Mills' and Hogarth's 'Gin Alley', of poverty, denial of dignity, and seeking of oblivion were transported to where they, or at least their children could prove wrong the self serving prejudices of their birthplace.

As governments fail to provide adequate health, education, and other services to the general population, law and order disintegrates, with new generations adding to the malaise as damaged children reach adolescence.

The present and future economic costs of the present situation should, and I hope will give the political parties the motivation to reduce the major causes of drug addiction and the production line of young criminals. Adequate Child Welfare is Australia's most urgent need and will be Australia's most economically profitable investment by reducing the enormous costs of crime, prisons, etc.

#### POSSIBLE PROGRESS

However as the business community has become aware of the advantages of the triple bottom line, and the efficiency disadvantages of workplace bullying, so they may, with help, become aware of the profitability of using their influence and resources to find and implement the means of reducing the number of victims of drug misuse, with one long-term method being insisting on adequate Child Welfare.

#### What's in it for them?

Increased stock losses, insurance costs, security costs, are just the start of the costs to business of the drug problem.

Retail sales fall as money is diverted from legal consumer items into the drug economy and the judicial and prison systems, and a larger prison population reduces the pool of paying customers. Extra taxes spent on drug law enforcement take funds from infrastructure, and education for future, employed, clients and customers, and also from health to keep those same people functioning.

Also the increasing problems of money laundering, when drug profits are used to start legitimate businesses which do not have pressure to be profitable and so can undercut established concerns, and the unethical and criminal methods used by those apparently legitimate businesses. Mutual discussions should uncover more reasons for co-operation on this problem. Also, as well as image most people in the business community honestly want to be responsible citizens, contributing to a safer society. They are used to dealing with facts and reality, any prejudices they presently have, I believe, can be changed by education.

Therefore funds should be made available to estimate the costs to business of the illegal drug trade and to educate the business community on true facts of the far more successful programs undertaken in some European countries, the actual (unofficial) results of present policies in Australia, and to find realistic means of dealing with Australia's drug problems.

Both the welfare sector and the business community, which of course are very influential could become a powerful allies in the fight against the demand side of the illegal drug trade.

And with both sectors on side adequate funds for child welfare and the education and training of the necessary personnel would be accepted as both desirable and an economic necessity.

Hoping that your consultations will bring adequate positive results

Brian Collingburn

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Brian Collingburn", is positioned below the typed name.