



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the Administration of Bail

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Your local voice



Inquiry into the Administration of Bail in the ACT

Submission from: Weston Creek Community Council
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LACommitteeJCS@parliament.act.gov.au

ABOUT WESTON CREEK COMMUNITY COUNCIL (WCCC)

As a Community Council, we are committed to advocating and supporting the Weston Creek residents in pursuing the expectations and values that enhance and ensure their safety, well-being, and quality lifestyles. The community of Weston Creek value social inclusion, security and the welfare of all residents.

Weston Creek Community Council appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on behalf of the residents of Weston Creek. Council looks forward to the response to the questions raised and is more than happy to discuss the issues raised in this submission.

Youth on Bail

It is imperative that young people on bail receive more in the way of community support programs that reconnect them with positive role models and removes them from environments that are harmful. Placement activities that put offenders in a positive environment and offer the chance to participate and re-engage with their local community without prejudice are the best chance we have of reducing recidivism. Specifically sporting programs through local clubs. These programs benefit the entire community but need to be properly resourced and supported by complimentary surveillance or monitoring.

While there may appear to be well funded institutional or agency supports for young people on bail, it is the community at large that provides the most value in supporting young kids on bail. We need to build the right framework – a combination of employment, education, religion and recreation – around kids on bail so that they aren't left to rot on a couch, get bored and go to negative environments. It's the employers, the schools and the community groups that take to supervising persons on bail to ensure they are in the right place at the right time. It all needs to be co-ordinated and resourced through a central case manager who co-ordinates every other stakeholder. I understand that this is currently largely the way it is being done. We need to work out where the gaps are and why that isn't working.

Supervision of People on Bail

If parents can monitor a compliant child's movements with a free app and a phone, surely, an agency can monitor the movements of a recidivist criminal with similar technology? There's no question of consent or 'human rights' and for the purpose of this argument; the offenders' rights are essentially quarantined in favour of the victims (and potential victims) till positive behaviours are demonstrated and freedom of movement is earned.

Closely monitoring offenders on bail through ankle monitors and/or phone apps is just a modern tool to regulate and retrain behaviours and also collect evidence because that's what has to be done. The police rely on evidence in court and tracking with ankle bracelets and apps is the most effective way to monitor, collect data on and help ensure compliance of bail conditions.

Counselling & Health

Many people on bail struggle with Mental Health and Substance abuse issues. In fact, it's probably the root cause for. It is essential that they are counselled during this time and assisted to 'make good choices. This includes coaching to keep them away from peers who are bad influences and from harmful substances. This is best delivered through amazing support services such as Menslink and PCYC who should be provided with more funding to offer more social supports through networking and harm reduction frameworks. There also needs to be a return to focusing on personal health during a period of bail and the provision of service and treatments that might provide insights to any underlying physical issues or undiagnosed ailments.

Early Intervention

The ACT Government is neglecting its duty of care to young people by utterly failing to provide well-resourced and inclusive community social programs, particularly in Weston Creek. It's been proven that keeping kids connected and engaged in their community from a young age through sports and social recreation programs improves health and wellbeing and sets a foundation of stewardship and care for both the individual, their community and their environment.

Strengthening community support through services such as youth centres, community centres, and outreach programs via sporting and social clubs can provide young people with positive alternatives to criminal behaviour and give them the opportunity to engage in healthy activities in a supportive environment.

Council cannot name one government funded or sponsored community youth social program for youth aged 12-18 in our local Weston Creek area, despite there being a dire need for it. It is our local area and its' residents that have been impacted and exposed to 4 youth deaths in 4 years and nothing has been done to prevent this continuing at the current rate.

Way Forward

Our community is really trying but we do not have any resources being provided to our area. The process of submitting for health grants, sporting grants, community grants etc, only to be denied is actually really impacting local volunteers who are losing faith in a government that does not care about local kids who have nothing to do and the families and community groups that want to help.

The early intervention is completely missing from this discussion and the Council wants it put on the table. It is time to say, enough is enough.

- There needs to be a round table organised immediately to discuss pathways with stakeholders for youth and people on bail.
- There needs to be a plan developed with those stakeholders
- The issue of early interventions needs to be addressed.
- There needs to be a frank and fearless discussion about the neglect of the Weston Creek and other non-central districts and flow on impacts that is having on the health and wellbeing of local residents and ultimately the broader ACT Community.

We need fresh ideas to be brought to an open table in a coordinated effort to fix this issue before we have more deaths.

I can be contact for further comment on this issue via the email address provided.

Simone Hunter

Chair – Weston Creek Community Council