

## ***“Strengthening Communities, Supporting Families and Social Inclusion”***

*Submission to the 2020 Summit by Father Chris Riley, CEO & Founder, Youth Off The Streets*

### Statistics that articulate how we treat our young people:

- Two in five young people will be contacted by an internet predator.
  - One in four girls will be sexually assaulted.
  - One in seven boys will be sexually assault.
  - In the last 12 months 123 kids died in NSW alone:
    - 63 because of parental substance abuse,
    - 49 because of parental mental health problems,
    - 85 because of domestic violence,
    - 9 because of neglect.
  - 73 were under the age of 12 months.
  - 25 were Aboriginal – 20% of all reviewable deaths.
  - 2005-2006 NSW DoCS Helpline received over 241,000 reports – up 11.4% on the previous year and 51% increase over 5 years.
  - There are 660 notifications a day in NSW.
  - Paedophilia has reached epidemic proportions with some experts calling it Australia’s biggest health crisis – yet it is a crisis that is rarely spoken about. Statistics shows 2,277 attacks by paedophiles were reported to NSW police last year.
  - Last year the average gaol sentence given to 120 paedophiles was less than three years, while 48 were let off without a gaol sentence.
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- In any given week, approximately 1 in 10 (or 168,000) 12 to 17 year olds reported binge drinking/drinking to harmful levels.
  - In any given week 1 in 10 (or 31, 325) 15 years old reported binge drinking.
  - At least 451,621 children live in a household where they are at risk of exposure to binge drinking by one adult.
  - 78,000 children live in a household where there is at least one daily cannabis user.
  - 27,000 children live in a household where an adult is using methamphetamines monthly.

References for these statistics: *Australian National Council on Drugs Report (2008)*



- ❖ Estimates suggest that half of the population over the age of 14 years drink alcohol.
- ❖ The most popular beverage types of 14-24 year olds are bottled spirits, liqueurs and pre-mixes in cans and bottles, and regular strength beer for males. Older females aged 21-24 also preferred bottled wine. For 12-17 year olds, the most important popular types of drinks for both sexes were pre-mixed drinks in a can, bottled spirits.
- ❖ Between 2000 and 2004 there has been a three and a half fold increase in preference of young female risky drinkers aged 15-17.
- ❖ By 18 years of age, approximately 50% of both males and females are risky drinkers. But the majority (67%) of young risky drinkers classify themselves as ‘social drinkers.’
- ❖ Young people are particularly vulnerable to acute harms arising from intoxication, including health, legal and social problems and 264 young people aged 15-24 die each year as a result of risky alcohol consumption.
- ❖ Alcohol is a major contributor to preventable illness and death, and is responsible for over 3,100 deaths and 72, 000 hospitalizations per year.
- ❖ In general, young adolescents (12-15 years old) do not initially enjoy the taste of alcohol, describing it as disgusting and burning the throat.
- ❖ 27% of 15-16 year old Australians believe that RTD advertisements are targeted at ‘people my age’ and almost 50% of 19-21 years olds believe that RTD advertising is aimed at ‘people younger or much younger than me.’

References for these statistics include: Choice Magazine February 2008 research on “Alcopops”,

[www.choice.com.au/printFriendly.aspx?ID=106195](http://www.choice.com.au/printFriendly.aspx?ID=106195), *Australian National Council on Drugs Report* (2008), and Jones, S.C., & Gregory, P., (2007), *What does Alcohol Advertising tell Young People about Drinking?*, University of Wollongong.

	Social Inclusion/Social Capital initiatives	Long-term Homelessness initiatives	Volunteering/Community initiatives	Philanthropic initiatives	Any other comments
<b>Families</b>	Review current range of family benefit payments and whether these could be better delivered as a parental leave payment.  Introduce parental leave payments to ensure parents can bond with	Provide more intensive <b>family-based</b> AOD interventions (for parents who are abusing alcohol and/or other drugs).  Provide better resources to women’s	Volunteering brings ownership and empowerment to communities, individuals and families. Volunteering needs to come from within communities, or if from outside of communities must not be perceived by		Youth Centres are acknowledged as being a place and space for young people and if resourced appropriately, can be the foundation for early identification/intervention and prevention initiatives; they are the way forward.

<p>babies in their first year of life, (this will reduce family stresses and problems with children in later life and improve retention of women in the work-force in the longer term).</p>	<p>services to deal with the impact of family violence on homelessness.</p>	<p>communities as ‘handouts’.</p>	<p>Programs need to be flexible and adaptable to offer a range of supports depending on circumstances. Diversity needs to be acknowledged, so participants have choices to deal with challenges and barriers. Programs of this nature can provide young people with appropriate life skills to deal with given situations.</p>
<p>Young parent support programs and ongoing workshops and forums in local settings focusing on <i>practical</i> and <i>realistic</i> guidance for the young mums and dads with real sensitivity to cultural needs and historical issues in Aboriginal families.</p>	<p>Engage Real Estate Institutes in ethical policy and practices around private rental access for families at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence/family breakdown.</p>	<p>Volunteering is not something that can be forced or mandated, i.e. “community service”, which is <i>not volunteering</i> as this puts an enormous amount of pressure on the NGO sector to support the initiatives that are not really valued by individuals or communities.</p>	<p>Many Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families will not seek support from DoCS when they are in crisis for fear of children being removed. Alternatives to mandatory reporting need to be investigated to assist families before problems escalate.</p>
<p>Re-invest in more local Baby and Early Childhood Centres with a return to the Health Centre Sisters who monitor weekly with new babies and mums in first 6-12 months (especially mums</p>	<p>Review international best practice and implement and fund best practice homelessness strategies in Australia; ones that provide housing stability in conjunction with support for mental health, job training, relationship and other counseling, community re-integration, don’t “ghetto-ise” low-paid or</p>	<p>Increase support and incentives to older retired or semi-retired people to become “mentors” or substitute “Grannies/grandpas” to young mums or families.</p>	

identified as “at-risk” by hospital staff and midwives. Regular “weigh –ins” and related support services could provide good early intervention. Consider education of adults/parents who have poor literacy and numeracy as well as their children in disadvantaged and Aboriginal communities; initiatives in Latin America to educate mothers helps to keep their children in school and increases their capacity to improve their own well-being.

Ensure that education can lead somewhere; education is not valued if there are no jobs or meaningful work in particular regions of Australia.

homeless away from community services or public transport.

Housing is a key contributing factor in many other social concerns. Overcrowding in many Aboriginal households does not allow for parenting or other programs or interventions to be implemented realistically; e.g. lack of space, lack of privacy, family obligations and commitments.

<b>Communities</b>	<p>Particularly in our troubled communities: provide infrastructure that is youth-friendly. Youth Centres need to be established and well resourced to reduce youth boredom, to provide a place of safety and to give youth a sense of hope and sense they are valued by their communities.</p> <p>Explore the value of establishing “Institutes for Healing Racism” in Australia.</p> <p>Increase and continue dialogue with Aboriginal people; especially those of “Stolen Generations”, not just the identified political or cultural “leaders” but those working behind the scenes.</p>	<p>Communities should be encouraged and supported with initiatives to come together to build ‘villages’ to raise their children and to bring unity where there is divisiveness and apathy.</p> <p>Promote young parent support programs in the community. These programs could be the basis that provides young parents with the confidence and skills that are necessary for independence. Young people need to be able to choose whether they wish to live in the family home or independently. Unfortunately for many, due to the total lack of low-cost public housing and the cost of private rentals, this is not even a possibility.</p>	<p>Support mentoring programs to engage people across the country and reconnect young people with positive functional adults and their communities.</p> <p>One of the best examples of community strengthening through volunteering is the CFA (Country Fire Authority) “Community Fire Guard”. It is about communities that live in bush fire prone areas working together to support each other if there is a bushfire. This example shows that communities must identify the areas of need themselves and develop volunteering strategies that are relevant and meaningful to them.</p> <p>Increase volunteerism by providing more incentives; such as free training, cover</p>	<p>Support longer-term 5-10 year funding initiatives to gain longer-term sustainable outcomes. Short term funding (from Philanthropic organizations, government or Corporations) sets up Many communities and community groups for failure because funding cycles are far too brief. Funding should be longer than election cycles or the “novelty” interest of <i>some</i> Corporate and Philanthropic organisations. Funding needs to be sustained until real change is evident and sustained. Don’t place unrealistic expectations on disadvantaged communities to</p>
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<p>transport and related costs up to a certain threshold per year, or build in as tax rebate etc. Donating "time" over a certain number of hours per year to a recognized community group or Charity could be tax rebated same as donating money over \$2 currently is tax rebated.</p>	<p>become functional and self-sustaining "overnight". Stay for the long-haul and invest in change over more realistic time-frames.</p>
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Q1.

We are living in an unprecedented social experiment. Never have so many people lived so far from extended family or outside of traditional communities, when adults served as collective parents for all a neighbourhood's young people. Never have so many marriages ended in divorce or divided families, nor have so many elderly people been relegated to unfamiliar surroundings. These developments have reduced our social capital; the relationships that bind people together and create a sense of community. We must find ways to deal with our profound loss of social connectedness.

Q2.

*Racism, prejudice, discrimination is alive in our communities; it needs to be named so it can be healed.*

I believe that as a strategy *Multiculturalism* hasn't worked as a means to heal prejudice. When *diversity and multiculturalism* is emphasized we have a tendency to avoid probing the nature of racism and prejudice; considerable energy is expended in mastering political correctness. As a consequence, the treatment employed to produce long-term racial harmony is at best superficial. With my view comes the understanding that we all have prejudices and biases that we need to challenge and change. Our prejudices can be built around race, religion, low IQ, high IQ, fat or skinny and one of the worst types of prejudices is displayed through bullying.

At the heart of my belief for healing our prejudices, whatever they may be, is to *embrace the oneness of humankind*. Facing reality is the first step to healing. The goal of the *Institutes for Healing Racism*<sup>1</sup> is not satisfied with merely helping people of different skin colours to *tolerate* each other. They are primarily concerned with helping people learn to love one another truly and honestly.

Prejudice, ignorance and racism can only be healed when we as human beings look into each other's eyes and acknowledge ***that we are all one family***.

- We are first human, then we are ethnic,
- There is only one race, the human race.
- The idea of race is man's most dangerous myth.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nrchr.org/resources.asp?category=Institutes%20for%20the%20Healing%20of%20Racism>