

Custodial care doesn't work for troubled young people

December 16 2013, by Niki Widdowson

Putting young people who have committed no crime into custodial care as recommended in the Carmody Inquiry Report won't work, says QUT's Professor Robert Lonne, after the Queensland Government announced it would implement all of the Report's 121 recommendations.

"This recommendation is well-meaning as it pertains to [young people](#) who are self-harming but we have tried custodial residential care before and it doesn't work, and can make matters worse" said, Professor Lonne, whose research was cited 40 times in the Report.

"Queensland closed the last such centre, the government-run Sir Leslie Wilson Youth Detention Centre in Brisbane, in 2001.

"What we found is that children experienced all the worst effects of institutional care and end up damaged adults as a result of their incarceration for behavioural issues - that's why we got rid of these types of centres by law."

Professor Lonne said there was a justice issue at stake.

"The Report argued that such a youth centre would be a therapeutic environment with social workers, psychologists and other allied health workers there to help deal with the problems young people experienced.

"But If you haven't committed a crime and you are not a risk to other people, is it right to be detained, in essence, for your own good?

"I am surprised the Government has accepted this recommendation because [residential care](#) for young people is estimated to be \$1000 a day and the sort of intensive programs needed are even more costly, and we know that the child protection system has already become financially unsustainable."

He said it was also surprising that children could be adopted out of dysfunctional families.

"Last year a major Senate inquiry investigating outcomes of forced adoption found that not only are the children badly affected but it has a detrimental impact on the whole family through generations.

"It is commendable, however, that the Report recommends no child can be removed until the family has had intensive assistance to deal with its problems, and this heralds a new approach for statutory [child protection](#) in the state."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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