



## OUTCOME STATEMENT

### ***“Troubled Youth” Forum***

#### ***Cause and effect: Save their childhood***

Held at Parliament House, Melbourne Wednesday May 24<sup>th</sup> 2017

***The National Council of Women, Victoria Inc. is proud to have been instrumental in organizing this public forum on such an important topic with the assistance of David Southwick MP and the following participants, each of whom is an expert professional in his/her field:***

***Kylie Bates (CEO Ardoch Youth Foundation); Dr Manjula O’Connor MBBS, FRANZCP, DPM, M.MED (Consultant Psychiatrist); Brendan Murray (Secondary School Principal); Lisa Ward (Deputy chair of Sentencing Advisory Board); Kel Glare AO (former Victorian Police Commissioner); Peter Norden AO FANZSOC (Adjunct Professor, Global, Urban and Social Studies, RMIT University). MODERATOR: David Thomson (Fellow Sir Zelman Cowen Centre, Victoria University).***

***The NCWV's aims are to ensure that the community and society in general will care for and cater to the needs of the most vulnerable in society, namely the most disadvantaged young children within Victoria***

***The above speakers addressed the most important issues which in their professional opinions and experience affect the most vulnerable children and their families in various communities across Victoria, to the extent that it leads to the children appearing in, or before the Victorian Justice system.***

The NCWV wishes to address just 3 main categories of problems identified by the speakers and for which a general consensus was evident in their presentations. Some of the papers will soon be available on the NCWV website at [www.ncwvic.org.au](http://www.ncwvic.org.au)

We believe that children are too valuable a human resource for the future of our society for adults to play with their welfare as a political football. Too many vulnerable children carry multiple "backpacks" of troubles, including traumatic experiences of domestic violence,

suffer mental health problems, lack of educational opportunities, poverty, immigrant relocation; all of which are adult induced and it is up to adult society to rectify through a holistic approach. Punishing rebellious youths does not prevent future and intergenerational adult criminality.

SOLUTION: The Government of Victoria to establish an independent bi-partisan authority to deal with all aspects of the welfare of children at risk from any or all the hazards associated with lack of adequate parental care.

1. The disadvantaged communities across the State have the highest concentration of families from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Their children are often the ones at most risk from inadequate education, recreational opportunities and care.

SOLUTIONS:

- a. Parental Education for parenting responsibilities starting on day one of a child's birth.
- b. Government resources to schools and families to be concentrated by postcode rather than only to individuals.
- c. Selective schools to be encouraged to include some children from disadvantaged areas and the "POLICE-IN-SCHOOLS" programme in areas where children are at risk to be reintroduced.

2. Large detention centres allow children and youths in trouble to 'feed off each other with bravado and exploits'! This can only entrench their mindset in criminal activities for the future as adults.

SOLUTION: Smaller facilities where the teenagers can be adequately controlled by staff and more easily rehabilitated through adequate programs in small groups.

In conclusion, NCWV would like to see all sides of politics address these issues for the sake of the current and future vulnerable Victorian children.

***This statement has been approved by the Council meeting of NCWV on the 1st of June 2017, in front of 43 delegates from Affiliated NGOs and Individual Members.***

*Signed:*

***Elisabeth Newman, Interim President NCWV***

***Jennie Russell OAM and Malvina Malinek OAM, Forum Co-ordinators***

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