

TRIPLE P – POSITIVE PARENTING PROGRAM[®]

Submission to the
Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry

March 2026



TRIPLE P INTERNATIONAL PTY LTD SUBMISSION TO THE QUEENSLAND CHILD SAFETY COMMISSION OF INQUIRY

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry.

The Triple P – Positive Parenting Program® (Triple P) is ranked by the United Nations as the world’s most extensively researched parenting program¹.

Triple P’s evidence-base includes over 870 theoretical papers, theses and reports, including more than 400 evaluations, of which more than 200 are Randomised Controlled Trials, the gold standard of research evidence. Triple P’s effectiveness has been proven across cultures, socioeconomic groups and in many different family structures, with programs supporting millions of children and their families across more than 30 countries worldwide.

Triple P programs are researched and developed at the University of Queensland. Triple P International Pty Ltd (TPI) has an exclusive licence to disseminate Triple P worldwide, through the University of Queensland’s technology transfer arm, UniQuest Pty Ltd. A Certified B Corporation® headquartered in Brisbane, Australia, TPI aims to create positive social change by putting evidence-based parenting strategies in the hands of every parent.

This submission focuses on evidence-based parenting support as an early intervention and prevention strategy to divert and disrupt youth crime trajectories.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT, CHILD SAFETY AND YOUTH JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

Parenting, and the parent-child relationship, is one of the most significant yet readily modifiable risk factors that impact child wellbeing, development, and behaviour. A child’s family, particularly the kind of parenting they experience, plays a crucial role in determining their life trajectory.

Harsh and coercive parenting increases the risk of both child maltreatment and the development of serious social, emotional and behavioural problems in childhood and later in life. It also increases the risk of engaging in juvenile crime and in dangerous behaviours such as drug and alcohol abuse and risky sexual behaviour.

Research highlights the pervasive and enduring relationship between early adversity and later offending, with an Australian study reporting that almost 80% of convicted adult offenders had a history of both child welfare and youth justice involvement². Children who are maltreated are particularly at risk of becoming involved in juvenile offending³.

Extensive evidence supports the critical role that a child’s family, as well as the type and quality of parenting they receive, play in the causal pathway leading to chronic offending⁴.

At initial contact with the justice system, adolescents are more likely to have experienced cumulative exposure to household dysfunction and maltreatment, as well as high levels of emotional and behavioural challenges^{5,6}.

Poor family functioning is a significant risk factor for adolescent conduct disorder⁷ and is associated with higher levels of interpersonal aggression in adolescents⁸. Specifically, children raised in family environments that expose them to inadequate parenting characterised by harsh, coercive, neglectful or inconsistent parenting, poor parental supervision or family violence are at greater risk of poor impulse control and impaired self-regulatory capability^{9,10}. This places them at greater risk for early-onset conduct problems, learning difficulties, poor school attendance, truancy, mental health problems and later antisocial behaviour, as well as offending in adolescence¹¹⁻¹⁴.

Children exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as social disadvantage, poverty, homelessness, parental mental health and substance abuse problems, separation or divorce of parents, and parental criminality are at greater risk of involvement with delinquent peers, persistent antisocial behaviour and offending in adolescence^{15,16}. Indigenous children are more likely to live in socially disadvantaged communities and experience higher levels of ACEs in their families than non-Indigenous Australians, and are over-represented in the juvenile justice system^{17,18}.

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (2023)¹⁹ (ACMS) reported widespread incidence and impact of child maltreatment across the country. ACMS results show up to 62% of the population (aged 16-65 years) have experienced abuse, and those who experienced maltreatment were 2.8 times more likely to have a mental health disorder.

The study found a significant link between child maltreatment and involvement in the criminal justice system and among its recommendations called for “universal and targeted evidence-based parenting education programs”¹⁹ to be widely accessible.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Prevention and treatment of youth offending, including recidivism, should be child-centric and family-focused.

Common protective factors associated with reduced rates of youth offending include caring relationships with adults, positive parenting styles, parental monitoring, perceived emotional support, warm family environment, positive peer relationships, and reduced substance use²¹⁻²³.

The Australian Centre for Research Excellence in Childhood Adversity and Mental Health reported that Triple P was one of only 2 programs to have a ‘very high level of evidence’ in preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)²⁴, out of a total of 26 interventions assessed.

In addition to traditional interventions that target crime prevention, parenting education and support is an essential and necessary part of any comprehensive strategy seeking to reduce youth crime^{25,26}. Parenting education and support can be embedded as part of a population-based approach that reduces the risk of child maltreatment, and destigmatises parent help-seeking.

Longitudinal studies within Australia and internationally highlight the importance of early intervention to support healthy child development. The ability to self-regulate at age three is predictive of health, wealth and criminality in adulthood, with children exhibiting lower self-control having higher rates of chronic disease, substance dependence and criminal convictions in adulthood.^{27,28}

Results from the Australian Institute of Family Studies’ Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) show significant and consistent associations between children’s social and emotional wellbeing and their family environment²⁹. LSAC results also show that improvements in the family environment are associated with increases in child prosocial behaviour and decreased problem behaviour.

Positive, nurturing, pro-social relationships lay the foundations for not only secure bonding and attachment in children, but also better self-regulatory capability, fewer social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and greater educational attainment.

Recent Australian evidence highlights the benefit of enhanced and targeted delivery support of evidence-based parenting programs to increase reach and engagement with the most socially disadvantaged families at high risk of poor outcomes for children and young people, including youth offending.

*Every Family 2 study*³⁰, a place-based trial funded by the [Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence of Children and Families over the Life Course](#), examined the population-level effects of Triple P programs in 32 highly disadvantaged communities in Queensland, targeting vulnerable families living with children aged three to eight years of age. Child maltreatment data from these Queensland communities was compared to 32 matched socially disadvantaged communities in New South Wales who received care as usual.

Implementation in the Queensland communities was strongly grounded in principles of place-based co-design, with dedicated funding to facilitate coordination and collaborative partnerships to increase engagement with local parents. The project delivery team actively sought and fostered relationships with diverse organisations and community agencies, including existing service provider networks, schools and early childhood centres, non-government organisations, health services, sporting and religious organisations, local businesses, and local and state government representatives.

Findings indicated a significantly greater decrease in child maltreatment substantiations and child maltreatment notification rates over a two-year period for the intervention communities in Queensland in comparison to the matched communities in New South Wales³⁰.

These findings mirror those from international Triple P population-based rollouts, including the *United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* trial that reported reduced rates of hospitalisation due to child maltreatment injuries, and out of home placements³¹⁻³³.

These outcomes demonstrate the value of a public health approach to offering proven parenting support in preventing child maltreatment among children living in socially disadvantaged communities that are at higher risk of youth offending.

Findings also highlight the influence of well-coordinated, co-designed, and place-placed community implementation partnerships in enhancing the access, reach and engagement in parenting support, to have meaningful and impactful outcomes for young people.

Parenting interventions that address the home environment have the potential to impact key risk factors associated with ACEs and reduce the likelihood of cascading impacts such as mental health issues, negative family environments, serious violence, and youth crime.

A multilevel system of parenting support that provides services of varied intensity to parents is consistent with a proportionate universalism approach where everyone has access to services if needed. Importantly, such an approach recognises and provides extra support to vulnerable families in need of intensive support services³⁴. Support available at whole-of-community levels can also reach families at risk who may not otherwise come into contact with the system, and normalise parent help-seeking³⁵ so they are comfortable engaging in support.

The Queensland Government's current investment in Triple P represents a commitment to early intervention and prevention that aims to ensure parents across Queensland can access Triple P's range of evidence-based programs. This support can be expanded upon by scaling up delivery across diverse disciplines, sectors, and service delivery systems, to create more access points for parents to receive help when and where it is needed, e.g., primary health care, early childhood education and care and schools, and community services³⁴.

A culture which values child safety, is responsive to children in need, and is perceived as beneficial to the whole community can help normalise participation in parenting programs at scale³⁶, reduce rates of maltreatment and prevent downstream interaction with the youth justice system.

APPENDIX A - REFERENCES

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