

SUBMISSION for Royal Commission into Family Violence

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It is a commonly held belief that EDUCATION is one of the keys to change in our society, and as an educator of many years this belief has been substantiated. Education is particularly successful in promoting change when it is supported by Government/s over a long period of time. When successive Governments remove funding for previously successful projects and interventions the magnitude of the change is significantly decreased. Unfortunately then, a newly appointed government is faced with “re-inventing the wheel” ... costly and often with less effective results. Hence, my submission highlighting two very effective programs that have been used in primary schools (including the one where I taught, and subsequently became Assistant principal) for many years. I was responsibly for implementing both programs with senior primary students.

HEALTHY FAMILIES:

“The Healthy Families Program (HFP, formerly Project) has been developed in response to concerns that the quality and style of parenting experienced by parents during their childhood is a significant influence on the manner in which they parent their own children.

Of greatest concern is the evidence that child maltreatment has been clearly demonstrated to have important intergenerational aspects”

(p. 2 Teaching Materials, Manual for Healthy Families Program, produced by VicHealth in association with Relationships Australia and Monash University. The program was partly funded by Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

I “trained” the teachers before they began delivery of the program, and I was required to have attended a day’s training prior to this. This program ran for 10 sessions with year 5 & 6 students (11 & 12-year olds) and over the years that I co-ordinated its implementation at Billanook Primary School there arose several occasions when children raised the difficulties they experienced in their homes related to family violence and its effect on them. A number of students disclosed that they were, or had been, abused either sexually, physically or verbally by someone in their home. Such disclosures were able to be reported to appropriate outside authorities and the children protected from further harm.

Of course, in order to report such incidents to other authorities, these organisations require adequate resources to make appropriate and life-changing interventions ...

I liken this to a jig-saw puzzle where all agencies are supported and funded adequately, appropriately and with the assurance that their resources are not dependent on the next government election!

BRIGHT IDEAS:

This was first published in Australia by OzChild and is based on Dr martin Seligman’s book “The Optimistic Child”.

The program was delivered over eight weeks to upper primary aged students and essentially teaches that optimism is a choice.

In 2010 I made a PowerPoint presentation of this program with minor alterations to the way it was presented at Billanook in an attempt to make it even more accessible for inclusion in an already crowded curriculum.

Unlike **Healthy Families** which can be included in the curriculum as a Literacy program (because it uses a number of relevant novels to support concepts), Bright ideas requires a stand-alone time commitment.

Please explore each of these programs and give serious consideration to updating them in preference to “re-Inventing the wheel”.

Kind Regards,
Glenda Hills