

Yoorrook Justice Commission
SUBMISSION OF VICTOR COUZENS

My name is Victor Couzens.

I live in Hamilton Victoria. I have four kids. Two of my kids are at school.

My submission is about the racism and problems my family has with the education system.

My kids' experiences at school

The youngest one who is at school, he's 10 and so he's grade 3. He's copping racism at the primary school now, at an early age. It's the older kids (grades 5's and 6's) who are putting racism on him.

There're other Koori kids that go there, but they're not as dark as him. But they all stick together, you know what I mean?

This is a problem this racism, because when there's problem at school, it comes home and rubs off on the brothers and sisters.

One of my kids has been having problems at school since November last year and hasn't been to school since February. At the moment he don't even look like he's interested in going back to school. You know what I'm saying?

We need more support for our kids to help support them at school.

Cultural learning and support at school

At the schools, there's no multicultural learning. But I thought that we could get someone to come in and do cultural studies with these kids. Someone from Windamara maybe. Someone needs to come up and teach them and interact with the principal.

My experiences at school

I went to Preston Technical School in Melbourne.

We had Koori teachers who were there every day from 9 till 3.30pm.

Like, when I went to school, we had Koori rooms. We had Auntie Lynn Thorpe and Diedre Bucks. You know what I mean? If you got harassed or something we'd go and go in there and speak to probably, Lynn Thorpe or Diedre Bucks and that and they would get on top of it.

But there's nothing like that here in Hamilton, you know what I mean?

But they could start up something like that here in Hamilton. Somewhere for the kids to go. You know what I mean? Instead of the kids come home or walking out. They need somewhere they can just go and can feel comfortable and relaxed, you know what I mean? Somewhere to relax till they're ready to go back to class.

Suggestions on how to improve the education system

These schools they need to understand our culture, our understanding of the way we - we do our day-to-day thing. And don't just come in and take over. Work with us. Instead of just you think you know it all and taking us away, work with us and let's work together and resolve it.

These schools don't understand our culture. It makes our kids feel insecure and then - then it leads to them going down the wrong track or - you know what I mean - or doing stupid things.

Like, the school needs to put a boundary in place or, you know what I mean, something in place where the kids know and they know not to cross boundaries. You know what I mean?

And they need to be more hands on for the Koori kids, so they can get better in their life. You know what I mean?

Then they don't have to feel bullied. And they don't have to go to school and cop racism all day. That way they can go to school and do their schooling and come home and be normal kids.

END OF STATEMENT