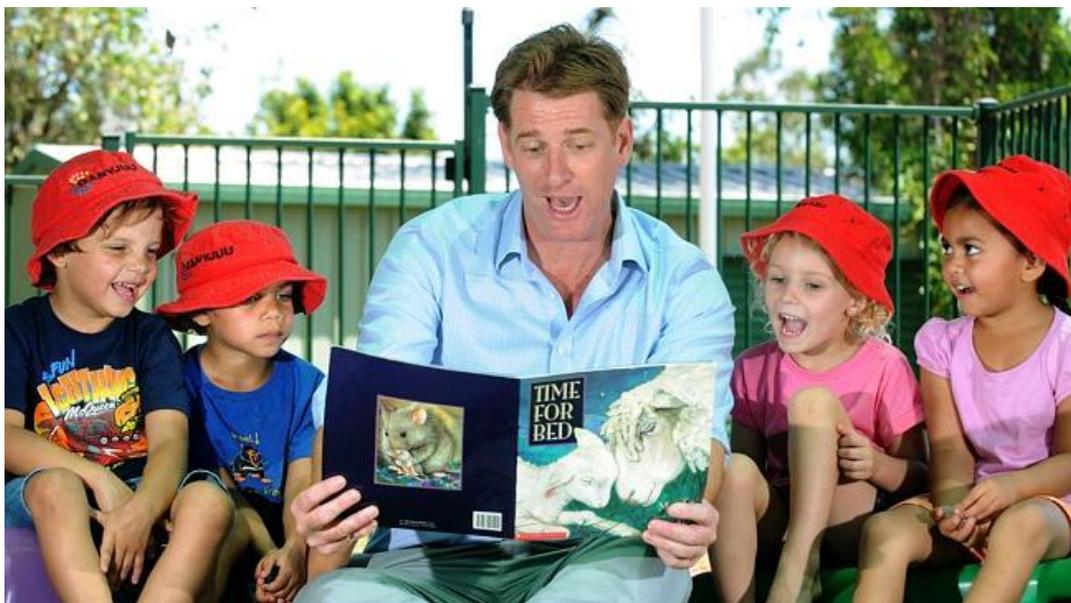


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The Courier Mail

Australian-first program, Logan Together, could be the key to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour in the city

by Judith Maizey
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Matthew Cox with Jysiah Jones, Norman Gyemore, Lilly Leon, Pamela Roumanu Ahsee. Pic John Gass

AN Australia-first program aimed at improving the wellbeing of Logan's children is expected to also help reduce the city's crime rate and anti-social behaviour.

Director Matthew Cox said the Logan Together program for zero to eight-year-olds was trying to do something never before done in Australia. “And, that is, in a single 10-year period change the development trajectory of an entire generation of local kids.” Mr Cox said the analogies about strong foundations in life were absolutely correct. He said if children grew up well then it led to less crime and fewer social problems like drugs and alcohol abuse. “We know if we can get kids to age eight in good shape then those kids go on to be successful teenagers and successful adults who can work and look after their own kids and contribute to the community,” he said. Mr Cox said Griffith University was the host organisation for the program, which involved 12 funding partners including three levels of government, charities and philanthropic groups. He said the program came out of the City of Choice Summit in Logan which followed the riots in Douglas St, Woodridge, in 2013. “There’s about 42,000 children under eight in Logan and most of those kids are doing great,” he said. “But about 12,000 to 13,000 are going to need some extra help to reach their potential.” Mr Cox said there were lots of things that were unprecedented about the program. “We’re very optimistic that we know how to do this as a community and then we will be leading Australia in how we look after our kids and how we can help them reach their potential,” he said. Mr Cox said every community had children who needed help, even the wealthiest in Australia. “Logan’s got extra reasons to be interested in this issue as it does have a higher proportion of children with development needs,” he said. “In Queensland, on average, it’s about 25 per cent of kids who need some extra support and it’s about 22 per cent in Australia. In Logan, it’s about 30 per cent.” Mr Cox said a lot of things went into producing healthy children including education, health, good social support and a good community environment. “If we can bring all of those things together in a concerted campaign, then we can make a really big difference for local children,” he said. — Logan Together will cost \$10 million and will be rolled out over the next 10 years. — Mr Cox said studies showed that the human brain grew more from the age of zero to one than one to adulthood “so language and social attachment was incredibly important” in that time.

