

Parents allowed tough love

By Julian Tomlinson, Cairns Post, 1 September 2016

“It’s time for politicians to admit this absurd experimentation on our kids has failed and take steps to correct the imbalance”

FINALLY the courts appear to have picked up on what many perceive to be one of society’s major failings – allowing children to dictate the rules.

In a blow to the epic failure that has been the attempt to redefine how children should be raised, a Sydney judge last week ruled in favour of a father who disciplined his son.

The eight-year-old kid – staying with his dad who had separated from the mother – refused to get out of bed and get ready for school, so the dad did what was necessary and grabbed him under the arms to lift him out.

Many people – myself included – would think this kid got off very lightly, but in a moment of state-sanctioned petulance, this kid complained to mum and she was able to serve the father with an apprehended violence order (AVO).

The kid exaggerated the “assault” and said his dad grabbed him around the throat, a charge not believed by parents’ new champion, Judge Paul Conlon.

After hearing all the testimony, Judge Conlon criticised a country that allows parents to be hauled into the criminal justice system for “letting their children know who’s in charge”.

He added that anyone who believed parents had no right to physically enforce the rules, doesn’t live in the real world.

In an era where judges are roundly criticised for some of their decisions, this one deserves high praise.

This case also highlights the absurdity of laws surrounding AVOs.

I’ve seen enough anecdotal evidence to form a very dim view of a system that allows people (usually men) to be forced to prove their innocence in the face of false allegations of violence by ex-partners.

I couldn’t count the number of doting dads I’ve spoken to who broke up with the mother of their children, only to be dragged through the courts on trumped up charges that can neither be proved nor disproved but which are very effective in preventing these men from seeing their kids.

This case also highlights the very serious problems associated with “satellite” or hands-off parenting, criminalising corporal punishment and treating children like adults.

Last week a 10-year-old girl in Melbourne caused a social media storm by complaining that a teacher had discouraged students from pursuing romance and they should concentrate on schoolwork.

This kid wrote a letter of complaint to the school saying that children should be allowed to experience love.

What’s worse is that her mother proudly shared it online.

So now we have a mother/10-year-old duo that ridicules teachers who insist – quite rightly – that students should worry about school first and romance later.

Even kids who attend the strictest religious schools end up getting married, so romance always finds a way to flourish, even with the barriers placed in its path – like improving your knowledge with silly schoolwork.

Meanwhile, Australian students’ literacy and numeracy proficiency is woeful, truly woeful, despite all the insistence from social engineers that the old ways were wrong and didn’t make learning “fun”.

This is another example of kids not only refusing to abide by the umpires' decisions, but also dictating the rules to suit themselves.

The flipside of parents not being allowed to dish out, or being advised against tough love, is parents who just don't give a hoot.

In Cairns, police nightly are dealing with pre-teens wandering the streets after midnight.

In days gone by, all it took was a look from mum or dad to keep kids in line because they knew that look would be backed by painful consequences if the need arose.

A tough upbringing prepared most people for the harsh realities of life in the real world, but there is a distinct impression now – with young people completely losing the plot when they don't get their own way – that new-age parenting is a complete failure.

It's time for politicians to admit this absurd experimentation on our kids has failed and take steps to correct the imbalance.

Previous parenting and teaching ideologies weren't perfect, but they were a damn sight better than what we've got now.

The don't smack, everybody wins a prize, "you don't have to do anything if you don't want to" methods are letting our kids down horrendously. julian.tomlinson@news.com.au