

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 5 May 2021

The NTG's budget and its proposed youth reforms are no good for the Territory

The NT Government's budget is framed in a way that is detrimental to the best interests of Territorians, hideously expensive and unlikely to be effective. It bolsters resources to allow the policing and surveillance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and reduces funding where it is actually needed, in providing effective solutions when dealing with complex issues, like youth justice.

Today, the Government moves to bring damaging and non-evidenced based youth reforms to parliament "on urgency". This is, yet again, a huge disappointment to the Territory.

CEO of Danila Dilba Olga Havnen said "More prisons and jailing more people does not work. Even the USA has moved away from locking people up. It is costly and does not work. It is time for the Government and Opposition to listen to the advice at hand and look at alternative options that work and that will maintain a safe and flourishing community. Both the budget and the youth justice reforms are not in the best interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth and families and of Territorians, more broadly."

"Both the Government and Opposition continue to studiously avoid evidence-based approaches to dealing with community safety that would positively contribute to the social cohesion of our community. This is not in the long-term interest of the Territory. It will not 'keep Territorians safe'." Ms Havnen said

Regarding the proposed changes to youth reform, representative organisations from the health sector have come together in an open letter to Ministers; Natasha Fyles, Nicole Manison, Kate Worden, and Selena Uibo, to implore the Government to look at evidence-based, therapeutic, trauma-informed and rehabilitative alternatives to youth reform to address issues associated with the complex health concerns of the youth.

CEO of AMSANT John Paterson reflected on the NTG's youth reforms, stating, "The current proposed changes will likely lead to a surge in re-offending and offer nothing more than a path to jail. The complex health needs of our youth need to be taken into consideration. These reforms are not in the best interests of our youth or in the best interests of the Territory."

“We call on the Government to reconsider the proposed youth reforms and talk to us. Punitive legislation does not rehabilitate young offenders or keep communities safe. We know the *tough-on-crime* approach only facilitates more crime and disadvantage for our community. It is time the NT government responded humanely and responsibly by addressing the real causes of youth offending and investing in these evidence-based approaches.”, Mr Paterson said.

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Spokespeople on Youth Justice Reforms:

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Dr Nick Fancourt – Pediatrician, RACP

Spokespeople in response to the budget:

Olga Havnen – CEO Danila Dilba