



MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIAN BAR ASSOCIATION URGES NORTHERN TERRITORY TO RECONSIDER PROPOSED BAIL LEGISLATION

The Australian Bar Association says the Northern Territory's proposed bail legislation to remove the presumption in favour of bail for repeat property offenders will only further exacerbate Australia's disgraceful Indigenous incarceration rates.

ABA President Patrick O'Sullivan QC said, "This proposed legislation will disproportionately target young Indigenous Australians in the Northern Territory, where the rate of indigenous people in prison is close to 90 percent. Indigenous incarceration is a national crisis and we need to be looking at solutions that divert indigenous people from the criminal justice system, not the other way around."

"It is a shocking fact that an Indigenous young person who has served a prison sentence is more likely to return to prison than finish school. On the other hand, we've seen that early intervention, prevention and diversion programs used in the ACT, have seen rates of young people in detention decrease by 35 per cent and arrests of young people down by 20 per cent over two years."

The Australian Bar Association recently proposed that mandatory sentencing laws, that have the biggest impact with minimum effect on Indigenous people, be amended or removed, and funds saved from housing prisoners redirected into programs that rehabilitate and reduce recidivism.

"Oregon in the US experienced a 72% drop in juvenile incarceration after the state reinvested \$241 million from prison spending to treatment programs and improved probation and parole services. The evidence into the value and efficacy of Justice Reinvestment strategies exists. It's time we put these programs into practice and start seeing some real changes to the Indigenous incarceration rate and break the cycle of crime."

The Australian Bar Association is urging the Northern Territory to urgently reconsider this proposal before it becomes another hurdle to overcome in the struggle to reduce Indigenous incarceration rates in Australia.

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