



youth affairs network qld

MEDIA RELEASE

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LNP policy position amounts to child abuse

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ) has slammed LNP leader, Deb Frecklington's opposition to raising of the minimum age of criminal responsibility as irresponsible. "It is very clear that LNP is playing politics with the lives of our children and the safety and wellbeing of the community, said Siyavash Doostkhah, Director of YANQ.

LNP's position, that despite any decision by the Council of Attorney-Generals later this month, they "would maintain the status quo" and continue locking up children in prison, if they were to come to power in the October state election, simply amounts to neglect and abuse of children at a systemic level.

Putting children in prisons has proven not to be a deterrent so it's absolutely disingenuous for the opposition leader to say they will reduce crime by "maintaining the status quo" and the incarceration of children. The barbaric and outdated practice of abusing children by locking them up in prisons instead of supporting them must stop.

YANQ is demanding that LNP stop playing politics with this issue. This is about our children's lives and it is much more important than a few seats in Townsville. There is a need for a bipartisan approach which is based first and foremost on the best interests of our children. It is about supporting our children to heal and to take their rightful place in society, not pushing them through the criminal justice system which is nothing other than a pipeline to adult prisons and a life of crime.

Research has clearly demonstrated that the earlier a child has contact with the youth justice system, the more likely that child will end up in the adult criminal justice system. "Youth prisons are simply a training facility for turning children into career criminals" said Mr Doostkhah.

The most simple, logical, humane, cost-effective and proven action will be for the government to immediately act and raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and divert the resources to supporting children, their families and communities. Anyone that opposes this is simply an advocate for child abuse. If you lock up your own child, for whatever reason, in a cold concrete room for days or weeks to teach them a lesson, your child can and will be taken away from you and your action labelled as child abuse. There should be no excuse for anyone to treat any child in this abusive manner and this includes government departments.

Mr Doostkhah has vowed that, once the decision has been made by the Council of Attorney-Generals to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility, YANQ would utilize all available means through international instruments such as the United Nations, to insure Queensland children do not continue to suffer abuse by being locked up in prisons.

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