



youth affairs network qld

MEDIA RELEASE

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Nothing less than a Royal Commission

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), the Peak body for youth issues in Queensland has reissued its call for a Royal Commission into Queensland's Youth Justice System.

Mr Siyavash Doostkhah, Director of YANQ expressed serious concern that the state government is refusing to acknowledge the need for a Royal Commission and trying to pull wool over public's eyes by calling yet another review. "Only a Royal Commission will have the ability to call and cross-examine witnesses, obtain evidence, while also providing protection to witnesses and inquiry members from legal action such as defamation" he said.

The Attorney General has already put limitations on the review she has called and is trying to limit the scope of the review to the allegations aired on the TV. "what we saw on the ABC 7.30 and Lateline programs this week were the tip of the iceberg and any attempt to limit investigations to what was aired is nothing less than an attempt to cover up much larger problems that have permeated all aspects of the youth justice system in Queensland for a long time.

"Royal Commission's powers of investigation are the only way to get to the 'truth'. We are talking about a system which has a long established history of cover-ups, a system that punishes individuals very strongly for speaking out". In their own words "Snitches get Stiches". said the YANQ Director

Mr Doostkhah also urged the Attorney General and the Labor government not to be afraid of a Royal Commission and possibility that it will do damage to the government. This is an area where Labor can show moral leadership and invite the opposition to approach this in a bipartisan manner. After all the problems with the youth justice system are nothing new and have been festering in the background regardless of which side of politics has been governing Queensland.

Attorney General needs to understand that people do not trust the existing pathways for raising issues or filing complaints. People have been burnt one too many times and there is no confidence, absolutely no confidence that there is any justice in a system that locks up incredibly young children in a prison and then brutalises them. That is why if the Attorney General wants to regain the confidence of the public in the youth justice system, she should accept that the best way to get to the bottom of all problems in the system and to use the opportunity for genuine reform is to support establishing a Royal Commission.

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