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AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE ASSOCIATION MEDIA RELEASE

ACT ATTORNEY-GENERAL LETS DOWN FIRST RESPONDERS

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) is disappointed with the ACT Government's response, particularly that from Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury, to a bill tabled to change the presumption for bail for people who assault first responders.

AFPA President Alex Caruana expressed frustration, saying that Australian Federal Police and ACT Policing members would be disappointed and angry with the decision of the ACT Attorney-General.

"It's clear that the Attorney-General values the rights of recidivist and dangerous offenders over community safety and those hard-working first responders who protect and administer health outcomes in the ACT.

"All this draft bill was trying to achieve was a fair and balanced judicial process, once a matter went to court. Instead, the Attorney-General has sided with those who assault first responders.

The AFPA questions the Attorney-General's reasoning for not supporting the Canberra Liberals' bill, and expects supporting evidence to be made available.

The AFPA also rejects the Attorney-General's statement implying that First Nations peoples are more likely to assault police officers or paramedics.

Mr Caruana said that people would continue to have been allowed to apply for bail under the Liberals' proposed bill, and that the AFPA does not want to see people locked up without due process.

Over the last few months, four ACT Policing officers have been hospitalised due to assaults. Three of these officers were attacked and seriously injured by an alleged offender on bail for assaulting first responders on a previous occasion.

"The AFPA is asking for an even and balanced judicial process when an offender is arrested and charged for assaulting a frontline worker. I highly doubt there would be a miscarriage of justice or over-representation as claimed by the Attorney-General. Ultimately, the court could still grant bail.

"As it stands right now, Director of Public Prosecutions prosecutors have to fight to remand someone who assaults a first responder with one hand tied behind their back.

"We believe that the alleged offender and their legal representatives should have to prove why they deserve bail. Bail for serious and violent offences such as assaulting a first responder should be a privilege, not a right and near certainty." Mr Caruana said.

For comments:

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