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MEDIA RELEASE

AFPA ACKNOWLEDGES RISE IN AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) acknowledges the announcement by ACT Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury of the increase in the age of criminal responsibility in the ACT to 12 years of age (up from 10 years of age). The AFPA maintains its concerns about under-resourced support and accommodation services for young people who come to the attention of the police.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that if raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12 was to go ahead, the two-year transition period before the age of criminal responsibility was then further increased to 14 in 2025 would provide valuable data about children offending in the ACT.

"We thank the Attorney-General for listening to our concerns and for his adoption of some of our recommendations.

"This has been discussed for a while now, and much work remains to be done. We would especially like to see more detail about the new community-based intensive therapeutic order initiative, noting that it only applies to children convicted of an offence. What happens to children who repeatedly offend but can't be charged?

"There are currently limited alternate diversionary options for young offenders in the ACT. More resources and funding would be required from the ACT Government to support police working with this new legislation."

Mr Caruana said he was concerned that police officers would become minders for children due to a lack of alternate options and programs in the ACT.

"While police won't be able to charge a child for family violence offences, there may still be a safety requirement for that child to be removed from the house. Would this action be legal, where does that child go, and for how long? ACT Policing is already under-resourced; if support services weren't in place, it would again fall to ACT Policing members to hold that child in protective custody.

"This could take general duties police members away from their regular duties for hours on end while they have to mind a child at a police station, with that child unable to be charged with a criminal offence.

For comments:

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