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MEDIA RELEASE

COMMUNITY SAFETY PUT AT RISK BY POOR JUDICIAL DECISION

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) is disappointed by yet another instance of a poor judicial decision endangering community safety in the ACT, after a 21-year-old man was arrested for serious and reckless driving offences after being granted bail less than 24 hours earlier.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that ACT Attorney-General Shane Rattenbury needed to urgently address bail and sentencing outcomes in the ACT before someone was killed or seriously injured by a recidivist offender.

“The alleged offender in this matter was bailed yesterday and was subject to a good behaviour order from 2022. He is now already back in custody for serious offences, which put the community and police officers at direct risk.

“The judicial officer who granted bail yesterday should explain this decision to the community. It is about time they were held accountable for their decisions.

“What measures to effect accountability or transparency would have been taken if this offender killed someone last night during the pursuit? The focus would have been on the actions of those police members attending the incident, and no one would have asked why the recidivist offender was even out on bail. The ACT Government or the judicial system would likely never have answered that question in any case.

“This is another example for the Attorney-General where the rights of one recidivist offender have been put ahead of the community's safety,” Mr Caruana said.

The AFPA continues to support bail and sentencing reform in the ACT, including supporting the bill proposed by Dr Marisa Paterson MLA to impose a negative bail presumption for people who face serious dangerous driving charges.

The AFPA is also calling on the ACT Government to provide the community with an update on the proposed Law Reform and Sentencing Advisory Council.

Mr Caruana said that the proposed council had been announced a year ago, and that there was only minimal information about the timeline for its establishment.

“There have been some serious incidents in the ACT recently, such as the ANU stabbing incident, where questions still need to be answered. ACT Policing's Operation TORIC has arrested over 300 people, resulting in over 750 charges. Of those arrested, 119 offenders were on bail, 38 were subject to good behaviour orders, six were on intensive corrections orders, and 19 were on parole.

“If those numbers alone aren't enough for the ACT Government and Attorney-General to implement a Law Reform and Sentencing Advisory Council promptly, then they aren't serious about sentencing, rehabilitation, recidivist offending or protecting the community,” Mr Caruana said.

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