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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FIVE-YEAR TIMEFRAME FOR CITY STATION UPGRADE “TOO LONG”

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) acknowledges the ACT Government’s plan to replace the City Police Station (including the possibility of a new ACT Policing headquarters being housed in the same building).

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that while he appreciated the Government’s commitment, immediate action was necessary.

“City Police Station is no longer fit for purpose. The building is falling down around the police officers and support staff who work there, and a new police station is required urgently. The risks to their safety and the public continue to be unacceptable.

“ACT Policing and its City Station-based members can’t wait another five years for a new police station. If City Police Station was permanently closed tomorrow, what would the ACT Government do to redistribute police resources and maintain the same level of response capabilities?

“I also ask what the ACT Government plans for the ACT Watch House, co-located within the City Police Station. The Chief Police Officer has gone on public record stating it is not ‘fit for purpose,’ and my members back this up.

“It follows that if you’re designing a new City Police Station, you would also need to look at a new ACT Watch House and where it is located, and how it is operated and managed.

“Does the watch house have to be managed by ACT Policing? Is this a role that ACT Corrective Services could instead undertake, with a small number of police officers located there for processing charges, preparing court briefs and forensic capture?” Mr Caruana asked.

“One model that deserves exploration is a dedicated 24/7 “sobering up” facility that isn’t the ACT Watch House, where people under the influence of drugs or alcohol could be looked after in a safe environment.

“The ACT Government talks about drug and alcohol abuse or misuse being a health issue. If that’s the case, why are people being taken into protective police custody and held in the ACT Watch House to ensure their safety and wellbeing? If the person affected doesn’t require hospitalisation, why shouldn’t there be a facility where first responders can take someone to be looked after until the effects of the substances have worn off?”

“A percentage of people lodged in the ACT Watch House are there for their own protection due to their intoxication levels. If police had better diversion options provided to them by the ACT Government, these people wouldn’t be waking up in a cell,” Mr Caruana said.

For comments:

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