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Australian Federal Police Association

Anti-consorting legislation will help fight organised crime in the ACT

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) welcomes today's (27 August 2024) presentation in the ACT Legislative Assembly of the *Crimes (Anti-Consorting) Amendment Bill 2024* by the Leader of the Opposition, Elizabeth Lee MLA.

Due to a lack of anti-consorting legislation, the ACT has become a meeting location for organised crime syndicates such as outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMCG).

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that OMCG's frequent the ACT because they know they can't meet in large groups and wear colours in many other jurisdictions in Australia.

"The ACT is Australia's only jurisdiction that does not have a combination of anti-consorting laws, banning of wearing colours or firearm prohibition orders which is ridiculous given the threat that organised crime, including OMCG's bring to the community.

"Anti-consorting laws work well when used alongside targeted and intelligence-led policing methodology. If it didn't work, we wouldn't see OMCG's congregate in the ACT like they currently do. The ACT is the only jurisdiction on the east coast of Australia that allows large groups of OMCG to gather," Mr Caruana said.

To ensure that the new legislation is used correctly, the AFPA supports oversight and scrutiny by the Ombudsman Office and the ACT Legislative Assembly, including the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said it's important that anti-consorting only focused on serious and organised crime syndicates and possibly people within the community that wish to do harm via acts of terrorism and violence.

"Anti-consorting is about breaking the communication and interaction between people wanting to commit crime and harm the community. It's not about a bunch of people who enjoy going for a motorcycle ride on Saturday afternoon, or a group of model train enthusiasts who meet regularly to talk about their hobby.

"We know organised crime prey on, and commit significant harm to the community via violence, drug and human trafficking and other criminal offences. This will place extra pressure and scrutiny on these groups," Mr Caruana.

The AFPA believes that the *Crimes (Anti-Consorting) Amendment Bill 2024*, presented by the Leader of the Opposition, Elizabeth Lee, is sensible legislation with safeguards in place to ensure the legislation is not misused.

AFPA President Alex Caruana said that age limitations, warning and limited timeframes are all included in the bill.

"The safeguards in place are sensible and protect the community. This is a case where the human rights of the entire community are more important than two individuals who have been convicted of crimes.

"To get to consorting charges being applied, firstly, the person must have been officially warned, they must have been convicted of an indictable offence, be over the age of 14 and habitually consorts with other convicted people. That's a lot of safeguards and a high threshold to meet before someone is charged with consorting," Mr Caruana said.

For comments:

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