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Media Release – Groundhog Day on Youth Justice

Despite ABS statistics showing the rate of youth offending in Queensland is more than 8% higher¹ than the national average, Shadow Minister for Police & Corrective Services, Dale Last, is concerned the most recent announcements on youth justice will result in little change.

Referring to previous announcements by the Labor government, Mr Last said there was a pattern of *'saying the same thing but achieving nothing'*.

"It's an extremely sad version of *'Groundhog Day'*," Mr Last said. "The Premier, the Police Minister and local MP's keep using the same words but there is little to show for it as the people of Townsville know all too well."

"For years now we have heard them refer to tougher action on bail to 'keep the community safe' but, when it comes to the actual legislation, the same holes remain."

"In June 2019, the government referred to homelessness as an issue affecting crime rates². Nearly two years later the Youth Justice Act still says that whether the offender has somewhere to live or not can't be taken into account when granting bail."

Mr Last said that, while the LNP will not stand in the way of the recent announcements, he feared there would be no ongoing commitment to reform youth justice.

"As a former Police Officer, I know that past performance is a pretty good indicator of future actions," Mr Last said. "It takes a tragedy for this government to act and, sadly, there is no follow up."

"Time and time again, the government has referred to young offenders not being engaged with education, but little has been done to address that. The government talks about toughening bail laws, but we still have a situation where the offender's reputation must be taken into account."

"One of the most concerning parts about the government's recent announcement, other than them repeating the same lines we have heard for years, is that there's no guarantee the changes will be in force any time soon."



“The tragedies we have seen in Townsville and in Brisbane have united the community in grief and led to calls for action now. Instead, we have a government that ‘anticipates’³ the changes will be introduced.”

“As a community, we are sick of empty promises on youth crime. We are sick of hearing the Premier, the Police Minister and Townsville MP’s repeat the same tired lines.

“Police are sick and tired of arresting the same offenders and being let down by ineffective legislation. At all levels, Police know that until they can engage in proactive policing, the youth crime epidemic will continue.”

“Every parent knows that there has be consequences for young people who don’t follow the rules. Yet, we have a government that says that if a young offender on bail breaks their commitment, police and the courts are powerless.”

“The revolving door and the endless chances have to stop. Breach of Bail as an offence means police can actually enforce the undertaking an offender makes when they are bailed and shows that there are consequences.”

“Despite all that, the government says no and, instead, we have to wait for an offender on bail to commit a serious crime. You can track offenders all you like but, unless the police can intervene when the offender breaches bail conditions, we have to wait for there to be more crime and more victims.”

“*Groundhog Day*, the movie, might be a comedy but the Groundhog Day that people in Townsville are waking up to each day is no laughing matter. The system is broken and, until the government accepts that, everything they do is tinkering around the edges.”

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Sources:

1. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-offenders/2019-20>
2. <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/87622>
3. <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/91439>