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Media Release – Screening and sharing to help solve crime

Urgent changes to screening procedures and information sharing processes are needed to help fight the youth crime epidemic according to Shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Dale Last.

The recent hearing into Youth Justice amendments in Townsville highlighted a case where crucial information regarding a juvenile offender’s mental health condition was not made available to staff at Cleveland Youth Detention Centre and Mr Last said that is cause for concern.

“I don’t think anyone would deny that some of these offenders are battling mental health issues,” Mr Last said. “And, while it doesn’t excuse their behaviour, we need to do our best to ensure that, while the offender is in custody, we at least try to provide treatment for their conditions.”

“For some offenders, treatment for an underlying mental health condition could play a big part in addressing their behaviour and, therefore, making the community safer.”

Mr Last said that the Legal Affairs and Safety Committee’s hearing in Townsville highlighted the community’s frustrations and also provided important information that, he hoped, would help shape the government response to youth crime.

“Unfortunately, it appears that the Police Minister’s promise to ensure departments cooperated is just another broken promise,” Mr Last said. “If a government department is aware that an offender has a mental health condition, you would think that information would be passed on when the offender receives a custodial sentence but it’s not happening.”

“Not only does that mean we miss the opportunity to address reasons for offending, it makes the job of the officers and staff at places like the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre harder and, potentially, more dangerous.”

“Having a mental health condition is not an excuse to commit crime but, if we can help address those issues early on, we may have a chance to not only help reform offenders but to also prevent crime.”

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