



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency

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NAAJA Board responds to video of Tennant Creek incident

Sunday, 8th of October 2023

Statement attributable to Acting CEO, Olga Havnen:

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency is deeply disturbed by the images contained in video clips of an incident involving two adult males and an Aboriginal child that occurred in Tennant Creek. No one has the right to use physical force and threats of serious harm against anyone, much less against a child.

NAAJA acknowledges the distress and frustration that victims of crime often experience when property is damaged or homes are broken into however, it is not appropriate for people to take matters into their own hands.

If the NT is ever going to take steps to improve community safety and wellbeing it is fundamentally important that government and communities address the underlying causes of these challenges.

Having ever more police and increasing the capacity of our prisons and detention centres is not the answer. If these approaches actually worked, the NT should be the safest place in the country.

The Northern Territory has the highest rate of incarceration in Australia and far exceeds that of the USA which has notoriously been renowned for its high rates of incarceration and human rights violations by police and others.

It's time for government and community to admit that current and past approaches to addressing crime is both costly and a complete failure.

Far too many of our young people in the youth justice system come from backgrounds of extreme disadvantage. They and their families have not received the support and services that many children and young people need. There is an abundance of evidence about "what works" yet governments of both persuasions have failed to adequately invest in family support and parenting programs, early childhood education, youth services and programs.

We are hopeful that this very unfortunate incident becomes a catalyst for change. This is an opportunity for governments – both NT and Federal to support community-led solutions to better resource and support victim-offender conferencing, evidence-based approaches to youth diversion, family support services, conflict resolution and mediation.

Everyone has the right to be safe – in our homes, on the street and in public places.

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