Statement: Juvenile Detention

26 July 2016

Like all Australians I was shocked and disgusted by tonight’s Four Corner’s program.

A community is judged by the way it treats its children and serious questions were raised by ABC tonight.

Equally the Northern Territory Government does not resile from its tough approach to those who don’t want to respect others people’s property or safety.

But tonight questions were raised about what is going on in our juvenile detention system that date back to 2010.

While the community grants those responsible for running our custodial system certain powers to do a difficult job, those powers have limits. Policies and procedures exist to codify what those powers are and when and how they can be used.

What we saw tonight raises questions about whether those powers have been used in the right way.

I have asked the Commissioner of NT Police to consider if the incidents highlighted by Four Corners were used in accordance with the powers afforded to custodial officers.

I have indicated to the Commissioner that if Police were to form a view that any law has been broken then the government and the community would expect that such matters be pursued rigorously.

I also will seek advice on the establishment of a Royal Commission to investigate the matters raised in the Four Corners story. I intend to consult the Leader of the Opposition on the terms of reference of this inquiry. I hope the process can begin prior to the caretaker period for the August 27 election commencing, however I will continue to work with the Opposition Leader to make sure such an inquiry happens.

I have full confidence in the majority of custodial officers working in the Northern Territory’s institutions. They have a challenging and difficult job, one that not many people wish to do. To those officers I want to say, you have my full support for the work that you do in upholding our laws.

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