



## MEDIA RELEASE

17 November 2022

# Offending kids desperate to escape criminal homes, ask for relocation

REVELATIONS that Far Northern parental figures are at times forcing their kids to commit crimes has led to a survey of previously incarcerated school students stating they would prefer relocation sentencing instead of jail, just to break away from their social structures.

An experienced Cairns flexible learning educator who teaches many high-school aged students previously locked up says she and her students overwhelmingly supported the Katter's Australian Party policy of relocation sentencing.

The teacher who asked to remain anonymous due to the nature of her work said she surveyed her class asking students if they would prefer going back to jail, or to a remote property to learn skills.

"Because most of these kids had been to jail, 90 per cent of them said they would rather go into relocation sentencing because they get to learn new skills, they'll most likely get a job out of it, and they can also get away from their friends and family who are involved in the crime," the teacher said.

"A lot of the time, I've found families instruct their young person to commit a crime or be involved in crime. At school I've experienced a child try to steal a car from the school grounds, they've stolen money, jewellery, they've done armed robberies and been violent towards others.

"Not all the time, but a lot of the time it's coming from the parents."

The teacher said she disagreed with the State Government's proposal to build a \$500m youth detention centre in Cairns, which [a recent Justice Reform Initiative report](#) found was an ineffective myth leaving people worse when they came out, and a "political announcement" to win votes.

The Cairns teacher said a lot of her students didn't have the resources or opportunities to gain appropriate life and job skills or education prior to their crime – a gap she said could be filled with relocation centres that would offer training.

"One family I pick-up for, there's a three-bedroom home and four families living in there, they have two or three kids each. They don't actually have the facilities to drive to school or even have the ability to go get a job or fill out a Centrelink form."

# BOB KATTER

Katter's Australian Party

Federal Member for Kennedy

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Kennedy MP Bob Katter said he agreed with the teacher and the need for education and training for offenders.

“There’s more than [three cars being stolen a day](#) in Cairns and there’s nothing being done about it,” Mr Katter said.

“We hear announcements about more police, more resources, more detention centres. Well it’s not working.

“As this teacher has stated, these (young kids) need to break the cycle and need education. They need to be banished before they can become civilized members of society, which is was the law of this country 260 years ago.”

KAP Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said community support for relocation sentencing to be trialled as a solution to the youth crime crisis was growing.

“The community, and it would appear even the youth themselves based on this feedback from Cairns, have been very clear – we need to get these kids out of town and removed from the environments that have led them down this path of criminal offending,” he said.

“Relocation sentencing is the only way to give them, and our communities, a chance.”

Hinchinbrook MP and KAP Deputy Leader, Nick Dametto said the views of the youth in Cairns showed just how out of touch the authorities were with the issue of youth crime.

“The Government constantly uses ‘the science’ as their safety blanket to justify their soft approach to youth crime. If they got their heads out of the science books and feet on the ground in places such as Mareeba, Cairns, Townsville and other problem hot spots, they could easily conclude for themselves what would help these kids.

“Young kids between the age of ten and 14 aren’t just born with the skills to break into houses and steal cars. They are taught these bad behaviours and those learnings are passed on from one age group to the next,” he said.

“Peer and family pressures play such a big part in youth crime and relocation sentencing would address some of those complexities by placing young offenders in an environment where they have the time and space to make meaningful change.”

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Keys points of the KAP Relocation Sentencing Policy:

1. Applies to young repeat offenders aged 10-17 who have been identified as 'at-risk' of recidivism and have a demonstrated history of escalating criminality
2. Provides alternative harsh sentencing (and/or bail arrangement) options to magistrates/judges when dealing with these offenders
3. These alternative sentencing options include 'on country' programs in a remote and approved location.
4. Onsite training would go towards qualifications in fields such as a rural operations, cook, butcher, horticulturalist, or stockman, but would not be limited to primary or rural industries. Students would maintain their interactions with formal education and vocational training services.
5. The goal of Relocation Sentencing is to break the crime cycle while providing children with life skills, education, and an ability to reintegrate as a productive member of society on release
6. It would be available to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous children.

For more information or a comment from Bob Katter, please contact the media phone: 0418 840 243

