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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**KAP Leader backs Petford Revival**

THE KATTER'S Australian Party Leader and Member for Traeger, Robbie Katter, has hailed a proposed plan by a charity to build on Geoff Guest's Petford Youth Training Camp (YTC) concept as a perfect complement to the party's Re-location Sentencing policy, and is urging the Queensland Government to consider it as a part of the solution to the growing youth crime problem in Queensland.<sup>1</sup>

Under the stewardship of Mr Guest and his wife "Aunty" Norma, the Petford YTC has operated as a training camp for troubled youth whose primary activity was to educate First Australian youths about horse riding and horse care.

It was funded by the state government from the late 1970s to the late 1990s. Mr Guest claims more than 4000 kids went through the program.

With the Queensland government's Strengthening Community Safety Bill set to pass through Parliament today, Mr Katter says skyrocketing youth crime rates in north Queensland over the last few years requires imaginative reforms which do more than "tinker at the edges."

The KAP has been urging the Queensland government to consider amendments to *The Youth Justice Act* to include provisions enabling magistrates and judges to sentence young offenders to a mandatory period of attendance at an "approved location," which could be a cattle station, a special school or training facility.

Mr Katter says, in its prime, the Petford YTC could have been selected as one of these facilities.

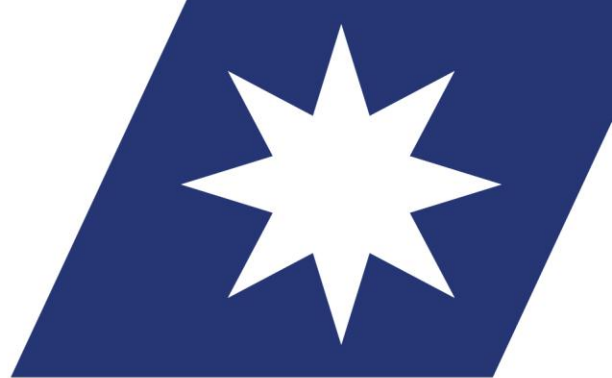
"Geoff Guest has always been a large focus for the application of our Re-location Sentencing policy.

"Under the current arrangements, the courts have only two options: sending the offenders to Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, or setting them free with an undertaking, typically to unsupervised community service or a program which the offender has no obligation to go to.

"A third sentencing option could be to send a young person to a facility like Petford.

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<sup>1</sup> [Youth crime: Geoff Guest speaks about Petford Youth Training Camp near Cairns | The Cairns Post](#)



“It could provide the procurement required to underpin a program which not only offers consequences to the offender, but also represents their best chance at rehabilitation.

“Petford offers a setting where the young person is free of distractions of social media, the destructive influence of peers, and where they can pick up some life-changing skills and re-engage with education, and it got results.”

The KAP’s relocation sentencing model represents a shift away from a bricks and mortar, capital intensive detention system with high fixed costs favoured by government and the opposition, toward a scalable, place-based model.

Meanwhile, the idea that “the farm,” as Petford is affectionately known, could get a new lease on life is warmly welcomed by many of those who’ve benefited from its structured, yet holistic programming.

North Queensland resident Jennifer Lee has known Geoff Guest, or “Old Man,” for decades, having worked and lived at Petford, and witnessed first-hand the impact that the program has on the youth who have gone there.

Jennifer describes the highly structured nature of the program as a key to its success.

“The farm keeps them busy. They are all in bed before 8pm because they are all buggered,” she says.

“They’d learn horse-breaking, ride at rodeos, make saddles and whips would get sold in town.

“I’ve seen kids go in there and come out as almost completely different people.”

She would love to see the community giving back in the form of funding for a new stove, and a vehicle for the “Old Man,” to help him continue doing the work he’s dedicated his life to over 40 years.

Mr Katter says that even the most evidence-adverse government bean-counters could learn a great deal from the success of such programs by taking the time to talk to past participants, and seeing where they are now.



“Geoff may not have been big on the adminis-trivia of running a program according to these modern evaluative criteria, and he’ll be the first to admit that.

“But the number of times I’ve had someone come up to me and say ‘Geoff Guest turned my life around’ tells me there’s something in his approach that’s worth trying to bottle.

“The government is always telling us ‘give us evidence that these programs work,’ well there’s no one so blind as those who won’t see.

“We have a government that refuses to see.”

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For media inquiries, please call 0466 282 973