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IPA: GET MORE COPS ON THE BEAT TO STOP VIOLENT CRIME WAVE

“The recent spate of cars being set on fire across Cranbourne illustrates the urgent need to reinvest some of Victoria’s criminal justice spending in the police force. This is the best way to stop violent crime,” said Daniel Wild, Research Fellow with the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

The recent car arsons come on top of violent carjackings across Melbourne’s south-eastern suburbs, where drivers were assaulted during the robberies. At the same time the Andrews Labor Government has been reducing the per capita number of frontline police and cut the opening hours of several police stations.

“We can be tough on crime and tough on government spending. But saving money by cutting the police is the wrong approach,” said Mr Wild. “Instead, we should pay for more police by incarcerating fewer low risk, nonviolent offenders.”

The unique benefit of prison is that it removes violent people from the streets. This keeps individuals in the community safe. But prisons are overused when low risk nonviolent offenders are locked up, according to forthcoming research by the IPA.

Victoria currently spends about \$130,000 per prisoner per year, and half of the prisoners in the state are there for nonviolent offences.

“The main purpose of prison is to isolate offenders who pose a threat to public safety,” said Mr Wild. “We should return prisons to their proper function as part of cracking down on violent crime.”

Reducing the proportion of nonviolent criminals in prisons would allow for greater investment in police and front line deterrents to keep our community safe. Some of the money saved could even be used help the State Budget’s bottom line.

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