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IPA: YOUTH CRIME RATE SHOWS THAT VIOLENT OFFENDERS MUST BE DETAINED

'The recent spate of violent crime perpetrated by youths across Victoria reveals a broken and backwards criminal justice system,' said Daniel Wild, Research Fellow with the free market think tank the Institute of Public Affairs.

'The unique purpose of prison and detention is to keep violent offenders off the streets. This enhances community safety. But many youths engaged in violent crime are not receiving custodial sentences,' said Mr Wild. 'Instead, our detention facilities are full of nonviolent offenders who in many cases are not a threat to the community. Our priorities are completely backwards.'

Over the past year total youth crime has increased by over 7 per cent, with robberies up by close to 60 per cent and property damage up by close to 20 per cent.

'The resources saved from detaining fewer nonviolent offenders could also be re-invested into the police force. A greater and more targeted police presence would deter crime and enhance community safety.'

'It is not so much that young people are locked out of society. Rather, there simply isn't the genuine threat of arrest or detainment for violent juvenile offenders,' said Mr Wild.

'Part of this problem can be solved by increasing the cost of violent crime through custodial sentences and a greater chance of arrest.'

'The other part of the problem can be solved through greater economic opportunity and better education outcomes to make legitimate behaviour more attractive than crime.'

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