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IPA: ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABUSE IN JUVENILE DETENTION SHOULD PUT CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM ON THE NATIONAL AGENDA

“The *4 Corners* exposé of abuse in juvenile detention centres in the Northern Territory has shocked the national conscience and should raise broader questions about Australia’s approach to criminal justice,” said Andrew Bushnell, Research Fellow at the free market think tank, the Institute of Public Affairs.

Last night the ABC aired a report detailing the abuse suffered by young people detained in the Northern Territory. Footage showed young people being held in isolation, tear-gassed, assaulted, and in at least one instance, strapped to a chair, hooded and alone.

“The level of abuse shown is extreme and demands investigation,” said Mr Bushnell. “As a country, we should also take this as an opportunity to consider our growing over-incarceration problem and terrible recidivism statistics.”

Forthcoming IPA research shows that Australia’s criminal justice system is in need of reform. The nationwide incarceration rate has risen to 196 per 100,000 adults, the highest it has been since just after Federation. The most serious offence of 47 percent of these individuals was a nonviolent offence. And almost 59 percent of adult prisoners have been imprisoned before – showing that our prisons are failing to correct antisocial behaviours.

“Indigenous Australians are overrepresented throughout the criminal justice system. 98% of children in detention in the Northern Territory are indigenous and 27% of adult prisoners nationwide are indigenous,” said Mr Bushnell

“These are national problems, affecting both juveniles and adults,” said Mr Bushnell. “It is time to put criminal justice reform on the national agenda.”

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