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My appointment as the ACT's 5th Director of Public Prosecutions comes at a time of great opportunities and great challenges. By way of opportunities, the strength of the office lies in the people, and my office enjoys some of the most outstanding lawyers and support staff I have worked with in my 17 years in the office. The processing of criminal matters through the court system has rarely enjoyed greater efficiency and effectiveness, and we finally occupy the long awaited new court complex. At long last the ACT is getting a dedicated drug court, and we have seen the expansion of other therapeutic initiatives such as the expansion of the restorative justice program and the introduction of the Warrumbul court which joins the Galambany Court as the ACT's second indigenous sentencing court. We also all have a great opportunity to forge new congenial relationships between all segments of the legal system and government, and I have already started work building these relationships.

The challenges however are great. Notwithstanding the ACT prison population is only around 65% of the national average, it has exceeded our prison's capacity. This is not all bad news of course. For example, over the last 10 years the percentage of the prison population serving time for sex offences has grown from below 7% to around 13%, suggesting that the SARP legislation and the efforts of the Royal Commission in removing barriers to reporting and prosecuting sex offences are working.

The bad news is however that over 75% of inmates are serving their second or subsequent term of imprisonment, up from around 56% 10 years ago, suggesting our prison rehabilitative programs are becoming less effective. Further, well over 20% of the prison population is indigenous, up from less than 10% 10 years ago. To put that in terms of common appeal, if we were to reduce the indigenous imprisonment rate to just double that of the non-indigenous, we would remove 20% of the AMC's population, transforming it from bursting at the seams to an under-utilised facility and reducing our imprisonment rate to around half the national average.

The upshot is that in order to address the bursting prison population, we need to address the indigenous imprisonment rate. To do this, we must focus not just on the factors driving indigenous offending but how we address them. This at the very least requires the collection, analysis and publication of data impacting indigenous offending. How many are inter-generational prisoners? How many experienced drug and alcohol, or domestic violence? How many were subject to care proceedings, or removed from their family? What health issues do they face? How many have PTSD? Or FAS? What is their highest level of education? What are their literacy and numeracy skills?

In other words, we need to move from diagnosing the problem to fixing the damage from intergenerational trauma and bridging the social, cultural and academic deficits. The ACT's population will continue to grow. My office will

continue to get better at prosecuting crimes and the demands on the prison will continue to increase. This makes it essential that we revisit the AMC's rehabilitation programs afresh to determine why our recidivism figures are increasing, and both analyse and develop sentencing options addressing the complex list of causes of our growing indigenous prison population. The positive is however, that having discussed this issue widely with members of the Legislative Assembly, defence lawyers and the judiciary, I can categorically state that there has never been a greater appetite to address this problem than now, and this appetite is shared by myself and my office.

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