



TOM VENNING MP

Member for Grey



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PORT AUGUSTA CRIME TASKFORCE WELCOME, BUT TOO LATE

The State Government's announcement of a crime taskforce in Port Augusta is a welcome acknowledgement that the town is facing a problem.

But this announcement is years overdue, and it has only come after sustained pressure from the Port Augusta community, the local council and the office of Member for Grey Tom Venning MP.

While reported crime has fallen across South Australia, it has been rising in Grey's largest centres, including Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Whyalla and Ceduna.

Over Labor's four years in Government, Port Augusta has recorded increases in reported offences year after year, despite repeated warnings from the community and calls for action.

It should not have taken years of community pressure to get the State Government to take Port Augusta's crime problem seriously.

The Government has now been forced to act, but the absence of meaningful advocacy from the Member for Giles has been striking. This is another example of the lack of respect this Labor Government has shown Port Augusta and its community.

"Crime in Port Augusta has gone up every single year since Labor has been in office. That is not a bad patch. It is a sustained trend that demands a sustained response," Mr Venning said.

"This taskforce needs to mark the beginning of a coordinated, ongoing response - not a one-off announcement.

"We now need to see clear targets, regular reporting and measurable outcomes. The community has already waited long enough."

While Mr Venning welcomes the announcement, he warned that other regional and indigenous communities are still being left behind, with Coober Pedy, the Eyre Peninsula and the APY Lands facing a serious shortage of police officers.

"In May, the South Australian Employment Tribunal recommended measures to attract officers to Coober Pedy. SA Police rejected those measures, citing budget constraints," Mr Venning said.

"Three months later, the Coober Pedy Police Station has just eight of its 19 positions filled, down from 10 in January.

"This is not simply an operational decision. It is a budget decision, and budgets are set by this Labor Government."

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Media Contacts

Joanna Tucker: 0459 942 506

Scout Carmichael: 0422 206 023