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MEDIA RELEASE

Reform to the *Bail Act 1978* – Time for action

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The peak body representing young people in NSW has welcomed yesterday's release of the Law Reform Commission's review of the *Bail Act 1978 (NSW)*.

Eamon Waterford, Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Youth Action & Policy Association (YAPA) NSW said "in this review, there are common sense solutions to our currently failing system, including requiring courts to take into account whether a person is young, from an Indigenous background or has a mental health or cognitive impairment."

However, YAPA is disappointed that the NSW Government is waiting six months to respond to this review.

"The decision of the NSW Government to hold off on responding to these recommendations means that we will see 2,000 more young people put on remand unfairly."

"Every day a decision is delayed means over 150 young people on remand who shouldn't be there – at a cost of \$600 per person, per day"

"Now is the time to act and we call on the NSW Government to accept the recommendations contained in the Law Reform Commission report by the end of June."

Every year, over 5,000 young people are placed on remand. Over 80% of the young people placed on remand do not receive a custodial sentence. 11% are not even guilty of the crime they are accused of in the first place.

Half of the young people held on remand are Aboriginal. YAPA is calling for the over representation of Aboriginal young people to be addressed.

The young people placed in juvenile justice centers are some of our most vulnerable:

- 40% have been in out-of-home care
- 50% have an intellectual disability or a borderline intellectual disability
- 88% have at least 1 mental health issue.

These young people are spending up to 3 months at a time in a remand centre, separated from community, family and education.

"This isn't just an issue of justice – for every day a young person spends on remand, it costs the state over \$600. This amounts to tens of millions of dollars a year that could be better spent on prevention and early intervention services. "

For further comment, please contact Eamon Waterford, YAPA Director – Policy & Advocacy on 0431 534 790.