



'EULOGY' FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

Criminal Lawyers Association of the NT president Marty Aust.

JASON WALLS

THE lawyers who represent kids facing the Territory's youth courts have slammed the NT government's bail reforms as "a dagger in the heart of our youth justice system".

Criminal Lawyers Association of the NT president Marty Aust said aspects of the bill appeared "misconceived, misunderstood and misrepresent the aims and outcomes they seek to achieve" – and may even be unconstitutional.

"The power of a court to grant bail to a person who

has been charged with an offence but not convicted is fundamental," Mr Aust said.

"Whether by design, indifference or incompetence, provisions within the bill appear to abrogate basic fundamental human rights as well as the doctrine of the separation of powers and the function and duties of a court under chapter three of the Australian Constitution."

Mr Aust said "embarrassingly for the government" provisions proposed in the youth justice bill were internally inconsistent and would effectively cancel each other

out in practice. He described the bill's second reading speech as a "eulogy" for youth justice and its passage as "the burial of our youth justice system".

In contrast, Police Association president Paul McCue welcomed the changes as a "positive first step in recognising the impact to victims of crimes in the current climate".

"It is clear the government have taken on board direct feedback from our members on the ground who, for too long, carry the workload of what is a larger social issue – one which has to start in the home," Mr McCue said.