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'A crime that LNP to waste \$50m'

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Legal experts have slammed the LNP's plan to spend \$50m on a "global scavenger hunt" for programs to reduce youth crime, declaring the programs already exist in Queensland.

Opposition Leader David Crisafulli on day one of his election campaign pledged \$50m to research global initiatives that successfully turned youth away from a life of crime.

In a joint op-ed for The Courier-Mail, former Supreme Court judge Margaret White and Justice Reform Initiative's Mindy Sotiri praised the step towards evidence-based policy, but said successful early-intervention programs existed.

"Save Queenslanders the money, we don't need to reinvent the wheel," Ms White said.

"The issue has never been the absence of ideas; it's the failure to properly fund, scale and resource the initiatives we already know work.

"Queensland taxpayers are already footing a \$218m annual bill on locking up more children than anywhere else in Aus-

tralia, a system overflowing into adult watchhouses.

"Place-based community interventions, such as those led by First Nations groups, have delivered enormous success."

Ms White noted 90 per cent of young people with a prior offending history who participated in the Johnathon Thurston Academy in Cairns did not reoffend within nine months.

Premier Steven Miles joined Thurston last week to pledge an extra \$2.6m to expand the program until the end of 2025.

"These are models that have been tested, refined and proven to reduce crime and reoffending," Ms White said. "So, why are we still acting like the solutions are out of reach?"

Economic analysis of early-intervention resourcing found every \$1 invested in early childhood education yields a \$2 return, while the cost of late intervention in Australia was a staggering \$15.2bn annually.