



NATSILS

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER LEGAL SERVICES**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Latest evidence shows continued deterioration in justice outcomes

Today, as the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Findings 2014* Report is released, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) call for a new and more effective approach that addresses the underlying causes of crime as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration rates continue to rise.

NATSILS Chairperson, Shane Duffy, said that the Report is the most comprehensive assessment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing produced in Australia, and while the evidence shows that progress has been made in some areas, indicators in relation to justice outcomes continue to deteriorate.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up only 2.3 percent of the adult population, but make up over 27 percent of the adult prison population,” Mr Duffy said.

“the Report shows that our women and young people are being particularly impacted by this trend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people being around 24 times more likely to be in detention and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women having the fastest growth in imprisonment with a 73 percent increase since 2000.”

Mr Duffy said that he welcomed the Report’s recognition that indicators of socio-economic disadvantage and changes to laws and judicial processes underpin the continued rise in the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“While the imprisonment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults has increased by 57.4 percent since 2000, the rate for non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has remained fairly constant, leading to a widening of the gap,” Mr Duffy said.

“higher rates of disadvantage, over-policing, more restrictive approaches to bail, mandatory sentencing, and a lack of non-custodial sentencing options in regional and remote areas are having a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and bringing them into contact with the criminal justice system at a greater rate”.

Mr Duffy said that ‘tough on crime’ approaches often touted by politicians at election time are a red herring and are ineffective in actually reducing crime rates and addressing the underlying causes of offending.

“While tough on crime approaches seem to be a stalwart of election platforms, they have actually been shown to have little impact on crime rates and making our communities safer,” Mr Duffy said.

“rather than spending hundreds of millions of tax payers’ dollars on building new prisons to house more and more people we should be looking at investing our money more wisely in approaches based on evidence of what works to address the underlying causes and prevent offending in the first place and the most effective ways of rehabilitating people who do offend.”

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