



MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Productivity Commission's Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2016 Report is a call for action

The Australian Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2016 Report* adds crucial data to the building momentum for change in Australia's dealings with its First Nations.

Cheryl Axleby, Co-Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) said that it was deeply concerning that in the quarter of a century since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander continued to worsen.

"One of the most alarming figures in this report, is that the adult imprisonment rate is recorded as having increased 77 per cent between 2000 and 2015, and while the juvenile detention rate has decreased it is still 24 times the rate for non-Indigenous youth." Ms Axleby said.

"This accords with the experiences of our member organisations' who are at the fore front of developing and delivering innovative early intervention strategies"

Ms Axleby said that this report added to a bigger picture which should be both alarming and saddening for all Australians.

"This report, on top of the Royal Commission into Child Protection and Youth Detention in the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth Government's own brief to the Australian Law Reform Commission's inquiry into Indigenous Over-Representation is a clarion call to action,"

In October, a Senate Committee Report handed down its report into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of law enforcement and justice services and found that the current breadth and depth of unmet legal needs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was completely unsatisfactory.

“Large numbers of our people – despite being massively over-represented in all areas of the justice system – remain unaware of their legal rights and lack access to basic legal assistance,” Ms Axleby said.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled legal services have the depth of experience and competency to support our communities with complex legal challenges and with support to prevent the development of complex legal challenges, and must be consulted when developing policy and solutions in the justice space,”

NATSILS had previously called on the Government to commit to the reversal of millions in cuts to the ATSILS due to come into effect in 2017 or we’ll be forced to stop offering critical early intervention services to our families.

“There is no further room for equivocation – all the evidence points to the need for drastic action from all Australian governments,”

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