



**NATSILS**

National Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**26 April 2021**

**NATSILS MEDIA RELEASE: Family of Wayne Fella Morrison continue their calls for accountability and systemic change as coronial inquest continues on Tuesday**

The coronial inquest into the death in custody of Wayne Fella Morrison resumes from 10:00am Tuesday 27th April at the Supreme Court of South Australia, Tarntanyangga/Victoria Square in Adelaide, S.A.

Wayne died on 26 September 2016, three days after he was pulled unresponsive from a prison van at S.A.'s Yatala Labor prison. Wayne had been restrained with handcuffs, ankle flexi-cuffs and a spithood mask and placed face-down in the van with seven prison officers inside. There was no CCTV footage.

Following Wayne's death, his family have been staunch and dedicated advocates in pursuit of accountability for his death and against systemic racism and Black deaths in custody.

The family are calling for:

- the seven corrections officers in the transport van with no CCTV footage to be physically present at the inquest, and to provide them and the inquest with details about Wayne's final moments in the van, and;
- to ensure spithoods and other harmful restraint practices in all prisons across Australia are banned.

*"Before George Floyd was killed by officer Chauvin, who was this week convicted of Mr Floyd's murder, he exclaimed "I can't breathe." What were my brother's final words to the 7 officers in the prison transport van before his death? Could he speak through the spithood over his head, while placed on his stomach with his wrists and ankles cuffed? For years we have anticipated coming face to face with the 7 officers who can likely answer these questions for us. Over the coming weeks we will stand, with the support of our allies nationally and globally, to call for truth-telling in the state of South Australia and in the Coroners Court. We continue to call for transparency, accountability, systemic change and support of the Royal Commission recommendations. At the end of the day, Wayne did not restrain himself." - Latoya Rule, Sibling of Wayne Fella Morrison*

*"Coronial inquests take a huge toll on the families and loved ones of those who have passed. My deep respect and thoughts are with the family and loved ones of Wayne Fella Morrison now, as the coronial inquest continues, and into the future. 30 years on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, we call for systemic reforms and the implementation of recommendations made in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Following through with these recommendations has profound, and life-saving, outcomes for our people." - Priscilla Atkins, NATSILS Chair*

*"Wayne's family have been waiting to know the truth about the death of their son for 5 years. That's far too long. The impact of not knowing what happened continues to traumatise his family. I make no criticism of the S.A Coroner but it is appalling that loopholes in S.A law have allowed this case to drag on for so long. Wayne's family deserve better. Why weren't there cameras in the van where Wayne became unconscious, and why wasn't an*

*officer recording the event so there could be accountability and transparency?" - George Newhouse who, Director of the National Justice Project*

April 15 marked 30 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody handed down their findings, and there have been over [474 deaths in custody](#). Our people continue to die in custody at alarming rates. We need to see every recommendation of the Royal Commission implemented.

Fifteen families whose loved ones have died in custody have united together in strength and solidarity, creating a [petition](#) urging Prime Minister Scott Morrison to meet with them face to face this year, hear their [demands for change](#), and work with them to put an end to Black deaths in custody. Their petition has received over 30,000 signatures.

On Monday 3rd May, Fella's family and their supporters will also gather at Tarntanyangga/Victoria Square at 1pm for a press conference. Wayne's family extend their appreciation to anyone who is able to join them physically in Adelaide in solidarity and support.

We ask that you please exhibit respect and understanding toward the family at this time. You can further show support by following their [Facebook](#) and donating to their [Go Fund Me](#).

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