



NATSILS
National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATSILS Media Release - Punitive new N.T bail laws have already lead to spike in youth custody numbers

NATSILS is devastated but not surprised to learn that the N.T Government's youth bail reforms are already having harmful and life-altering effects on our kids, with a [week-on-week increase](#) in youth in detention reported since the reforms were introduced in May.

NATSILS member NAAJA, who assist in the welfare of all Aboriginal young people in police custody and detention, has seen a significant spike in the number of Aboriginal children arrested, held in police custody and locked up on remand in detention.

Alarming, a \$2.5 million expansion of Don Dale Youth Detention Centre was recently announced by the N.T government, flying in the face of the Royal Commission into the Detention and Protection of Children in the Northern Territory who handed down the recommendation that the Centre must close.

At a Senate Estimates hearing this week, Minister Worden was questioned extensively on the new N.T youth justice reforms and increase in youth detention numbers. Alarming, the increase of children in custody was confirmed at an projected rate of 10% increase per annum. Minister Worden applauded the N.T's work to date, particularly lauding the work undertaken since the Royal Commission was conducted over 4 years ago, commenting on Government's ability to take *'a very broken system that resulted in a Royal Commission and turn it around and put in all the necessary multi-layers.'*

"These ill thought out laws are already leading to a dramatic increase in the number of Aboriginal children going into police custody, being subject to electronic monitoring and ending up locked in youth detention. We hold serious concerns about Aboriginal children being separated from their families and communities, and overcrowding in detention centres with increased numbers of children from Central Australia being transferred to the notorious Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in Darwin." - **David Woodroffe, NAAJA Principal Legal Officer**

"These punitive laws are capturing young first time offenders who are ending up on remand when they would not ordinarily enter into the youth detention system. It is tragic to see the same failures of a broken system that the Royal Commission sought to reform. It is time for evidence-based and community-led solutions to create pathways away from jail to support young people to succeed." - **Priscilla Atkins, NATSILS Chair/NAAJA CEO**

NATSILS and NAAJA are calling for the N.T government to work with Aboriginal organisations to prevent youth offending and address the underlying issues driving children and youth contact with criminal justice. Aboriginal-led solutions work, and mean that all of our kids will have healthy bodies and spirits; their families will be supported, strong and connected in caring homes; with access to culturally safe legal, disability, family violence, education, and health supports. These solutions are imperative in ensuring self determination and ending over-incarceration of our people.

END OF RELEASE

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