



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

13 November 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATSILS Media Release: No more empty commitments - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids' lives matter

NATSILS is outraged at the announcement that the Meeting of Attorneys General (MAG) *"support developing a proposal to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 including with regard to any carve outs, timing and discussion of implementation supports."*

Futile and deceiving, this announcement does little to better the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, who make up a staggering 65% of the kids in the criminal legal system.

There has been a chorus of support both nationally and internationally for Australia to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to *at least* 14 years old.

Locking kids up in prison causes lifelong damage to their physical and mental development and means that they are more likely to get stuck in the quicksand of the legal system. The medical evidence is clear - no child belongs in prison, but 14 years old is the absolute youngest age a child should be subjected to the criminal legal system.

It has been over three years since Attorneys General committed to exploring options to raise the age. Three years of inaction is damaging the lives and futures of our kids - and we are sick and tired of meaningless statements. If governments only raise the age to 12 years old, then 456 out of the 499 children under 14 in prison last year will remain locked away.

Raising the age is one action that Australian governments can take right now that will have an immediate and generational impact to end the over-incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids and to give our kids a brighter future.

END OF RELEASE

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