



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

24 January 2022

NATSILS Media Release: Genocide, dispossession, stolen children, violence and racism - January 26 is not a date to celebrate

'Invasion Day', 'Survival Day', 'Day of Mourning' - January 26 marks the beginning of genocide, dispossession, stolen children and wages, systemic violence and racism toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in so-called Australia.

The effects of colonisation are still being endured by Aboriginal people and communities in every state and territory. This is evidenced by the horrifying rates of over-incarceration and deaths in custody of our people.

Over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody since the Royal Commission 30 years ago. That's 500 of our Elders, brothers, sisters, children, parents. Every single one of those people have loved ones and communities who have been forced to live each day grieving their passing. All the while, Governments sit back and stall on the urgent action needed to stop our people dying in custody; even when the solutions are clear.

Our children make up a disproportionate 65% of the kids in the criminal legal system, close to 100% in some jurisdictions, with some as young as 10 years old. Last week marked 1 year since the United Nations slammed Australia's treatment of First Nations people and called on Australia to raise the age in its Universal Periodic Review. Governments are still delaying action to raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years old. This would dramatically change the lives and futures of so many of our kids and communities.

"This Invasion Day, we call on Governments to stop failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This starts with implementing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, addressing the discriminatory policies, systemic racism and the over-policing that has caused our people to be the most incarcerated on earth. Our people have waited too long for justice and accountability. We have 60,000 years of survival in our bones, and we will not rest until we see real and lasting change." - **Jamie McConnachie, NATSILS Executive Officer**

NATSILS acknowledge that this January 26 marks the 50th anniversary of the historic Aboriginal Tent Embassy in Canberra, on Ngambri-Ngunnawal Country. We pay our deep respects to the original founders and acknowledge the significance the Embassy has held for half a century for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty and self-determination.



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Until Black Lives Matter, until our people no longer die in custody at horrific rates, until we raise the age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 - January 26 is not a date to celebrate.

Today, January 26, and every day, NATSILS acknowledges the strength and power of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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