



SATURDAY 26th FEBRUARY 2022

NATIONAL SUPPORT TO BAN THE USE OF SPIT HOODS AND RESTRAINTS ON CHILDREN IN THE NT

Peak national justice, child welfare and advocacy groups have joined calls for the Northern Territory Government to stop using spit hoods and restraints on children.

ACOSS, Change the Record, NATSILS, Save the Children and the Human Rights Law Centre call on the NT Government to implement recommendations from the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children as promised.

The Royal Commission in the NT was called in 2016 by the then Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull after shocking images of a child strapped into a restraint chair with a spit hood over their face were aired on national television.

The incoming Northern Territory Labor Government promised the use of spit hoods and restraint chairs on children would be banned. When the Royal Commission recommended spit hoods and restraint chairs be banned in 2017, the NT Government supported the recommendations in full.

This week an investigation by the NT News has revealed spit hoods and restraint chairs are continuing to be used on children in the Territory. <https://ntcoss.org.au/media-releases/shameful-backflip-on-spit-hoods-and-restraints/>

The Human Rights Law Centre's Legal Director Nick Espie said:

"The images of a child being hooded and strapped to a chair were an international shame. The Royal Commission recommended banning the use of spit hoods and restraints. The Chief Minister assured the nation that they would be."

"The fact the spit hoods and restraints have continued to be used by NT Police despite our Chief Minister banning them is more than an oversight, it is a silent deception, and another example of half measures and half efforts that are followed up by punitive reforms.

"The NT Government must end this cruel abuse of children."

Change the Record Co-Chair Cheryl Axleby said:

"In 2016, the Australian community was shocked and appalled to see those notorious images of an Aboriginal child hooded and strapped to a chair in Don Dale. In 2022 it is unforgivable that this barbaric and inhumane treatment of our children continues."

"The Gunner Government promised that the cruelty perpetrated against our children would never happen again. Yet we found out this week that the use of spit hoods and restraint chairs never stopped. We call on the NT Government to end the mistreatment and abuse of our children, shut Don Dale and ban spit hoods once and for all."

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) Executive Officer Jamie McConnachie said:

“To learn this week that spit hoods are still being used in the NT is absolutely appalling. The fact that they are used on 12-year-old children makes me sick to my stomach.”

“The Commission’s recommendations were crystal clear - the use of spit hoods and restraint chairs must be prohibited.

“Time and time again, life-saving recommendations are ignored, and our people continue to pay the price.”

Save the Children, Executive Director of Australian Services Matt Gardiner said:

“It is deeply shameful that spit hoods are still being used on children in the Northern Territory. It is a blatant, disturbing violation of their rights.

“Children should never, ever be subjected to this kind of degrading and dehumanising treatment. We call on the Northern Territory Government to deliver on the recommendations of the Royal Commission and stamp out this disgraceful practice once and for all.”

ACOSS Chief Executive Officer Dr Cassandra Goldie said:

“ACOSS was extremely disturbed to hear that the Northern Territory government had backflipped on their previous commitment to ban the use of spit hoods and restraints on children.”

“The use of these measures is nothing short of cruel, and the serious damage and emotional distress they cause to children has been well established.

“We urge the Northern Territory government to uphold their previous commitment to banning these devices.”

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