



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



NATSILS AND CHANGE THE RECORD MEDIA STATEMENT: ROLFE VERDICT

Change the Record and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services have expressed their dismay that once again an Aboriginal person has died in custody with no consequences.

No police or prison officer has ever been convicted of murder for the death of a First Nations person, despite over 500 First Nations people dying in custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. We send our strength, solidarity and deep respect to the family and loved ones of Kumanjaji Walker and Warlpiri community.

We support and amplify the [calls of the Walker family and Yuendumu elders](#) for a ceasefire in our communities - no more guns, for community constables and for Senior Elders and community members to be involved in decision-making for our people.

Cheryl Axleby, Co-Chair Change the Record:

“It is hard to feel justice has been delivered when time and time again Aboriginal people are killed in custody but no one is held accountable. Interactions with police should not result in the death of our people.

“Too often police are a law unto themselves. Our mob are subjected to over-policing, racial profiling, harassment and assault. We continue to call for greater accountability and oversight of police. Ultimately, there will be no end to the death of our people in custody as long as governments continue to rely on police to respond to social, health and poverty-related issues.

“It is both tragic and predictable that introducing armed police into situations which require mental health interventions or other forms of expertise and support runs the risk of someone getting hurt or killed.

“Kumanjaji Walker had his whole life ahead of him, nothing can bring that back. Our hearts are with Kumanjaji Walker’s family and the Warlpiri community.”

Jamie McConnachie, Executive Officer of NATSILS:

“Kumanjaji Walker’s family and the Warlpiri community have collectively shown incredible strength and power in their tireless work supporting their community and advocating for justice and accountability for their brother and son for over two years.

“The family of Kumanjaji Walker and Warlpiri community have been grieving his passing for two years and yet not one police officer, correctional officer, prison guard or organisation has been held criminally liable for a Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander death in custody.

No one should have to go through the pain of losing a loved one in custody. Over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991. So many, like 19 year-old Kumanjayi Walker, were our young brothers.

“NATSILS stand in solidarity and deep respect with all families whose loved ones have died in custody in their calls for change, justice and accountability.”

END OF RELEASE

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