



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

MEDIA RELEASE

“No more Aboriginal deaths at the hands of police” – NATSILS signs open letter from Kumanjaya Walker’s family to NT Government

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The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) has joined with more than 20 organisations in signing an open letter from Kumanjaya Walker’s family to the Northern Territory Government, urging them to end Aboriginal deaths at the hands of police.

The open letter was delivered to the Chief Minister and NT Ministers, following the release of the coronial report in Yuendumu last month.

It calls for the Finocchiaro Government to publicly commit to implementing the recommendations of Coroner Armitage in the coronial inquest into the death of Kumanjaya Walker, and to engage with Aboriginal communities and the legal sector.

Karly Warner, Chair of NATSILS, says, “We express our deepest condolences and solidarity during this incredibly difficult, nearly six-year process the Yuendumu community has endured.

“Together with Kumanjaya Walker’s family and more than 20 other organisations, we are all calling for the NT Government to accept and implement the recommendations of the Coroner,” said Ms Warner.

NATSILS is also calling for all jurisdictions to implement systems for completely independent investigations of deaths in police custody. This echoes the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)’s call for independent oversight to deliver true accountability and transparency in cases of police misconduct towards Aboriginal people, and to drive structural change in the police force.

The Coroner’s report highlighted the racism of the NT Police Force, “an organisation with hallmarks of institutional racism”.

“While we welcome the Coroner’s recommendations to NT Police, including strengthening its anti-racism strategy, these internal actions are not enough. We need proper oversight of police and accountability including for any violence, racism and deaths that occur in police custody.

“We support the calls from the Walker family, which reflect clear, community-driven solutions that are actionable. These are practical and necessary steps the NT must take to create safer communities for everyone,” says Ms. Warner.

“We are at yet another critical point, and the way forward from this moment could save lives, or could lead to more avoidable deaths of Aboriginal people. This choice will define the legacy of the NT Government and its police force,” says Ms Warner.

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Media contact: Catalina Casar, 0421 547 759, catalina.casar@essentialmedia.com.au