



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

MEDIA RELEASE

SA youth legislation is meant for ‘bikie gangs’: will not prevent crime and will harm children

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The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) and Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) are sounding the alarm on the first of a suite of harmful legislation expected to be debated in South Australia Parliament this week which criminalises children and will make communities less safe.

Klynton Wanganeen, CEO ALRM, says this legislation will have dire consequences for communities and will put more children through the criminal justice system.

“South Australia has the second-lowest crime rate in the country, and yet the State Government is pushing this extreme legislation that will not prevent crime and will harm our children,” said Mr Wanganeen.

“The South Australian government is focusing on political point-scoring, and Aboriginal children will suffer as a result.

Mr Wanganeen said the Serious and Organised Crime amendment bill will lead to increased incarceration and trauma for children, particularly Aboriginal children.

“If this Bill passes, it will overturn core legal protections, including the presumption of innocence, the right to bail, and the principle that imprisonment should only be used as a last resort.

“It will also allow police control orders for children as young as 10 years old based on what they wear, who they associate with, or even based on allegations that haven’t been proven.

“This sounds like a free pass for our kids to be racially profiled and targeted.

“The bill will lead to more Aboriginal children being thrown into jail. Not only is this damaging for the child, but it actually increases the risk of them cycling in and out of detention, both as a child and as an adult. So it harms children and makes the community less safe.

Melissa Clarke, General Manager NATSILS said it is deeply disappointing to see South Australia follow the national trend of state and territory governments pursuing harmful laws.

“South Australia has joined in on the race to the bottom, ignoring all the evidence and the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

“The evidence is clear; investing in support that prevents children from interacting with the justice system in the first place is the answer.

“The South Australian government must work with Aboriginal leaders and communities; and child, medical and legal experts to design youth justice responses that value care, support and prevention over control to ensure the best outcomes for our kids and communities,” says Ms Clarke.

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