



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

MEDIA RELEASE

UN calls out Australia for racial discrimination while PM missing in action

8 May 2026

The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination has handed down a scathing [statement](#) on the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia's so-called criminal justice system.

The Committee warned the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the criminal legal system in Australia "reflects systemic and structural racial discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

The Committee noted deep and grave concerns that multiple Australian states and territories enforce a lower minimum age of criminal responsibility than the threshold under international human rights law; that children are being held in solitary confinement and fitted with spit hoods; and that Australian children are subject to harsh adult penalties, including life imprisonment.

Nerita Waight, Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), says that evidence and condemnation are mounting against Australia's harmful child incarceration policies.

"This is yet another warning flare to the Prime Minister that Australia is heading down a dangerous path. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are being sacrificed so that state and territory governments can score political points," Ms Waight said.

"The Federal Government has the legal authority and the moral obligation to enforce our national human rights obligations, including raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 in line with international standards.

"The world watchdog for racial discrimination is calling Australia out for its blatant disregard for children's rights and its persistent racism. This is shameful. The Prime Minister cannot ignore this. In years to come, he can't say he didn't know.

"We are urging the Prime Minister to call an emergency summit on youth justice. We are waiting and the world is watching," Ms Waight said.

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

The statement from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination can be found at:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2FCERD%2FSWA%2FAUS%2F11498&Lang=en