



NATSILS

National Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE



**Real Safety
True Justice**

MEDIA RELEASE

Victoria's pursuit of continuing to politicise Aboriginal kids in the lead up to an election is dangerous and misguided.

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In the lead up to the Victorian election in November, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) is alarmed by conservative party platforms seeking to influence further punitive approaches to youth justice through a swathe of dehumanising media coverage politicising our children and young people.

The final report of the Senate Inquiry into youth justice and incarceration found the “youth crime” epidemic was unsubstantiated and feeding community fear rather than supporting community-based solutions that keep everyone safe. The Inquiry called for implementing minimum standards for youth justice to help stem this dangerous race to the bottom that is harming so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Nick Espie, Executive Director of NATSILS says “Those who believe throwing children in jail will make communities safer have resigned to a cowardly approach to youth justice, which lacks the leadership and accountability to accept that traumatising children will make them more likely to fall into a cycle of crime, ultimately making communities less safe.

“We don't need more policing or more jails. The evidence makes it clear this does not make communities safe.

“All state and territory governments should be investing in approaches that prevent children from coming into contact with the so-called justice system in the first place.

“As a critical step in fixing the youth justice crisis, we need national minimum standards for the treatment of children in the youth justice system, which supports arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child being used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.

“We need national leadership on youth justice. The Senate Inquiry into youth justice and incarceration supports our call for the Prime Minister to step up and act.

“NATSILS maintains our call for an emergency summit on youth justice for Aboriginal leaders to be heard about what solutions actually work to keep communities safe,” says Mr Espie.

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