



NATSILS

**NATIONAL ABORIGINAL & TORRES
STRAIT ISLANDER LEGAL SERVICES**

4 July 2017

Media Release

NATSILS calls for national action following reports from the Bimberi youth justice centre

Following an article in the *Canberra Times* highlighting a litany of systemic human rights abuses against children over six years inside the Bimberi kid's prison, NATSILS calls on the Prime Minister to act immediately to stop our kids being mistreated.

"These are serious allegations of kids being taken away from their families, repeatedly abused, offered drugs and encouraged to fight other kids whilst in the care of the Government", said Mr Wayne Muir, Co-Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

"From Barwon in Victoria, to Cleveland in Queensland. From Don Dale in the Northern Territory to Cobham in New South Wales and Banksia Hill in Western Australia, and now Bimberi in Australia's Capital Territory, over the past year we have heard story after horrifying story of kids being abused in our youth justice systems."

We call on Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull to:

- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their organisations and representative bodies to develop a national Youth Justice Action Plan to prevent such abuse taking place;
- engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their organisations and representative bodies to achieve Indigenous participation in, and equal access to, alternatives to imprisonment for our kids;
- resource place based community led early intervention programs and supports; and
- review the implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Report and ensure independent community led oversight and monitoring.

We are deeply concerned that the reports from all over the country portray an overwhelming number of systemic abuses, including the use of dogs, solitary confinement, hog ties and evidence of kids who have frequently attempt self-harm and suicide are being met with violence.

"Our young kids must be in an environment that is safe, nurturing and consistent with expectations about responsibility" said Mr Muir

"It is appalling that 26 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody tabled its report, many of the recommendations have not been implemented. It is the responsibility of all Governments to engage in direct action to implement the recommendations of the RCIADIC and to ensure our kids are not taken away from their families and subjected to these appalling conditions whilst in the care of the Government", Mr Muir concluded.

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