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MEDIA RELEASE

NATSILS calls for a new national approach for youth justice ahead of Royal Commission final report

The findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory will soon be handed down on 17 November and it's time for Australia to act.

'Our youth justice systems across the country are in need of urgent reform. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are 25 times more likely to be incarcerated than non-Indigenous young people. This is a disgrace and requires national action and accountability', said Wayne Muir, Co-Chair of NATSILS.

'Only through a collaboration of the Commonwealth, and each State and Territory, working together with Aboriginal organisations and communities we will see real change for our kids', said Mr Muir.

'The Royal Commission must be bold in its reform and make practical recommendations that will see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children diverted away from the notorious children's prisons around the country and instead provided with opportunities to thrive in their community. The Royal Commission in the Northern Territory follows numerous Inquiries into the same issues', said Priscilla Atkins, CEO of NAAJA.

This week in Canberra, leaders of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services call on the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to:

- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their organisations and representative bodies to develop a national Youth Justice Action Plan;
- 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;
- commit to the immediate implementation, adequate resourcing of and independent oversight and monitoring of all recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory; and
- protect Australia's children by leading and coordinating the response of all the jurisdictions to ensure measures to address youth justice recommendations are developed collaboratively and not in isolation.

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