



NATSILS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Peak health coalition calls for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice targets

Today the Close the Gap Campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equality has launched their platform for key commitments for an incoming Government entitled *Building on the Close the Gap platform: Commitments for an incoming government*

The plan includes a call for the creation of new justice targets to address the over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the first year of the incoming Government's term. This echoes repeated calls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations, including NATSILS, for the inclusion of justice targets within COAG's Closing the Gap policy initiative.

"The over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children is a key social determinant of health and a national emergency which demands a much higher level of attention from all Australian governments," said NATSILS Chairperson, Shane Duffy.

"seeing justice targets included as part of the COAG Closing the Gap policy initiative will shine a brighter light on these issues and enable all Australian governments to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities to find effective solutions to address these issues."

Mr Duffy endorsed the call by the Close the Gap Campaign that it was absolutely essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, peak bodies and communities were directly involved in the development of new justice targets as well as in the development of a concrete and coordinated strategy that outlines how the targets will be achieved, as previous frameworks to address over-imprisonment have suffered from a lack of formal commitment and binding actions.

"As the peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice body in Australia, we are committed to working together with all Australian governments to develop targets and an ongoing strategy to address the unacceptably high imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Mr Duffy said.

"one of the glaring omissions in the original COAG Closing the Gap targets developed in 2008 was that of over-imprisonment. The creation of justice targets would pave the way for a National Partnership Agreement between the Federal and state and territory governments to focus concrete action on reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australian jails."

Earlier this month Labor announced its commitment to implementing justice targets and while the Shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, has voiced his support in recent months, the pressure is now on the Coalition to officially join Labor's commitment to closing the gap in incarceration rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.

“Incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are at crisis point. We desperately need a bipartisan approach to address this issue as urgently as possible.”

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