



NATSILS

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

MEDIA RELEASE

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Labor to add justice targets to Closing the Gap

Today's announcement by Labor to include new justice targets to address the over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the Closing the Gap policy initiative has been applauded by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations, including NATSILS, have long been calling for the inclusion of justice targets.

"Labor's commitment recognises that over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this country is a national emergency and that much more needs to be done by all Australian governments to address the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children in Australian prisons," said NATSILS Chairperson, Shane Duffy.

"It's not only the social and economic disadvantage faced by our peoples that leads to unacceptably high imprisonment rates, but also the disproportionate impacts of laws, sentencing and policing. Seeing justice targets included as part of the Closing the Gap campaign 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 highlighted that it was absolutely essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, peak bodies and communities were directly involved in the development of the 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.

"We welcome today's announcement and 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 Closing the Gap targets developed in 2008 was that of over-imprisonment. This announcement paves the way for a National Partnership Agreement on the Safe Communities building block between the Federal and state and territory governments to focus action on reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's jails."

NATSILS also expects that the Coalition will join Labor's commitment to closing the gap in incarceration rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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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