

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 November 2019

NATSILS MEDIA RELEASE: “Police violence is killing our people” National calls for accountability and justice as 19-year-old Warlpiri man dies after police shooting

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS) calls for answers and police accountability after the death of young 19-year-old Warlpiri man, Kumanjayi Walker, who was fatally shot by Northern Territory police in Yuendumu on Saturday night.

“We stand with Kumanjayi Walker’s family and the Yuendumu community in their call for justice. A young man’s life has been taken by police violence. The family and community deserve answers and police accountability, from an independent investigation that looks at excessive use of force and lack of adequate medical treatment,” said Cheryl Axleby, co-chair of NATSILS.

“This is the second Aboriginal death from police shooting in two months, since Joyce Clarke’s killing in Western Australia. We need national leadership on this injustice - police violence is killing our people and must end.”

NT Police have stated that the officer involved in the shooting was acting in self defence after attending a property to act on a warrant of alleged breach of a community corrections order. Police have confirmed that the shooting occurred after a community funeral. There are reports that the Aboriginal Community Police Officer was locked out of the Yuendumu police station.

“Reportedly police and medical staff received treatment on the night in Alice Springs. Community members have shared concerns with us about the adequacy of Kumanjayi’s medical treatment, including his evacuation for critical medical care. They deserve answers about whether Kumanjayi Walker was afforded the same quality of medical care,” said Ms Axleby.

“We are shocked at reports that community Elders and the Aboriginal Community Police Officer were refused access to Kumanjayi Walker by police after he was shot. Aboriginal Community Police Officers can prevent these injustices occurring. We are very concerned at reports that his family were not notified of his death until early Sunday morning. These are breaches of fundamental human rights and dignity,” said Nerita Waight, co-chair of NATSILS.

“Despite new Custody Notification regulations, police did not inform the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency that Kumanjayi Walker was in custody. The Custody Notification Service is in place to save lives and there must be answers as to why police are not following their legal requirements.”

“Police must not investigate police. We call for the police officers involved to be immediately suspended pending an independent investigation. We urge police to take seriously the community’s request for police officers to leave the community during this time of sorry business and healing,” said Ms Axleby.

“The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory recommended training, programs, law and policy reforms which, if implemented, may have prevented this young man losing his life to police violence.”

END OF RELEASE

Media contact: Roxanne Moore, Executive Officer of NATSILS, 0407 097 955, rmoore@vals.org.au