

**17 November 2017**

**MEDIA RELEASE:**

Today the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory ('the Royal Commission') handed down its final Report, containing recommendations to reform the youth justice and care and protection systems in the Northern Territory following significant individual and systemic failures. The Report details systemic failings of Northern Territory's youth justice and care and protection systems and calls for a 'profound shift from past practice' to reform people designed systems that have traumatised and criminalised children, families and communities.

NATSILS welcomes the Royal Commission's Report and encourages Australian governments to urgently recognise its relevance to the youth justice and care and protection systems of all States and Territories, which have been the subject of numerous inquiries and reports detailing the significant reform necessary to meet the needs of children and families.

"The Royal Commission's Report informed by almost 12 months of investigation and consultation, must not fall on deaf ears. Numerous reports have been commissioned by and delivered to Government that detail the disgraceful state of youth justice and care and protection systems across Australia", said NATSILS Co-Chair Cheryl Axleby.

"All States and Territories must learn from this Report and the Commonwealth must seize this unique opportunity to lead and coordinate the reform of youth justice and care and protection systems in all States and Territories", said Ms Axleby.

"The Royal Commission heard first hand from many children and young people who bravely told of their haunting lived experiences in prison and care and protection systems and generously shared their proposals for ways forward, to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Commonwealth Government has a responsibility to these children and all children in Australia to ensure they remain safe and supported in community", said Ms Axleby.

"CAALAS and NAAJA and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) remain significantly under resourced. To ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are kept safe and have access to justice, our ATSILS must be resourced to address the vast unmet legal need of children and their families right around Australia", concluded Ms Axleby.

In consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and community controlled services, NATSILS calls upon Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull to:

- commit to the implementation, adequate resourcing of and independent oversight and monitoring of recommendations made by the Royal Commission;
- protect Australia's children by leading and coordinating the response of all jurisdictions to ensure measures to address youth justice recommendations are developed collaboratively;
- develop a national Youth Justice Action Plan;
- develop alternatives to imprisonment and the removal of children to ensure kids remain safe and supported in their community;
- adequately resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services;
- resource place-based community led programs and supports; and
- fulfil the Commonwealth's responsibility to provide basic universal services such as health, housing, education and welfare to ensure children are not forcibly removed from loving families due to inequality and disadvantage.

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