

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cleveland Youth Detention Centre shows abuse of youth in detention is a national issue

National Advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, ANTaR, tonight called for the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the Northern Territory to be expanded to cover all jurisdictions across the country, and for the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT) to be urgently ratified by the Australian Government.

The call came following the ABC report of another case of alleged mistreatment of young people in detention, this time at Townsville's Cleveland Youth Detention Centre, as shown on the 7.30 Report tonight.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said that it was now incumbent on the Government to expand the Northern Territory Royal Commission and ratify OPCAT to ensure our young people are safe from mistreatment.

"It is unacceptable that we could be allowing, or turning a blind eye to, institutional mistreatment of young people, overwhelmingly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, without a national response," Mr Meehan said.

"We need a national inquiry now. We simply can't allow this to go on," he said.

"It is well past time that the issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth incarceration 'piqued the interest' of the Federal Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion," he noted.

"We've been all but yelling at the Federal Minister to pay attention to this issue for years now. We've pressed him to introduce justice targets to reduce the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, which are currently 26 times the rate of other young people. Sadly he's ignored us."

"If he's incapable of acting, Minister Scullion should be replaced," he said.

ANTaR is the only incorporated non-Indigenous organisation dedicated solely to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and working to educate the wider community, shape public opinion and speak up for justice, rights and respect for Australia's First Peoples. ANTaR is a member of the Change the Record campaign, people can take the Change the Record pledge to show their support for addressing the incarceration crisis of First Peoples - <https://antar.org.au/webform/change-record-pledge>