

**MEDIA RELEASE - 31st March 2016**

### **Royal Commission into Family Violence: An Important focus on Aboriginal women**

Today the Change the Record Coalition welcomed the release of the report and recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (Royal Commission). The report provides 227 recommendations aimed at addressing and preventing family violence, and includes an important focus on the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

Change the Record Co-Chair Jackie Huggins said, “We commend the Royal Commission for highlighting the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, whose voices have too often been silenced in policy discussions. The Royal Commission’s Report signals a new era for tackling family violence and its recommendations for a holistic and whole-of-community response should be considered by all levels of government.”

“In particular, we welcome the Royal Commission’s acknowledgement that there has been an underinvestment in culturally safe early intervention initiatives, and we commend the Report’s recommendation that significant investment in Aboriginal community controlled services should be an urgent priority for Government. It is vital that all levels of government invest in culturally safe and targeted early intervention and prevention strategies aimed at increasing the safety and reducing the experience of violence, with a focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children” said Dr Huggins.

Co-Chair Shane Duffy said, “The Report’s emphasis of the need for greater investment in legal services and crisis services is also welcome. It is important that all levels of government invest in national coverage of services to meet need, with priority for services that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled, including Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.”

“Significantly, the Report also highlights the barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people face in accessing support services, and points to the importance of involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their organisations and representative bodies in the design and implementation of policy solutions.”

Change the Record welcomes the Royal Commission’s Report, and its detailed recommendations around reducing violence against women, child protection, women in prison and investment in services. We look forward to reviewing the recommendations in more detail over the coming months.

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*The 'Change the Record' (CTR) Coalition is a group of leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, community and human rights organisations working collaboratively to address the disproportionate rates of incarceration and violence experienced by Indigenous Australians.*

*The CTR Coalition has identified two goals:*

- *Close the gap in rates of imprisonment by 2040; and*
- *Cut the disproportionate rates of violence to at least close the gap by 2040 with priority strategies for women and children.*

*The CTR Coalition is calling for greater investment in early intervention, prevention and diversion strategies. These are smarter solutions that increase safety; address the root causes of violence against women, cut reoffending and imprisonment rates, and build stronger and safer communities.*

*The CTR Coalition Steering Committee includes:*

- *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda*
- *ANTaR*
- *Amnesty International*
- *Australian Council of Social Service*
- *Federation of Community Legal Centres (Vic)*
- *First Peoples Disability Network (Australia)*
- *Human Rights Law Centre*
- *Law Council of Australia*
- *National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations*
- *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services*
- *National Congress of Australia's First Peoples*
- *National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum*
- *Oxfam Australia*
- *Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care*
- *Sisters Inside*
- *Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos*