



MEDIA RELEASE

16 organisations release Blueprint for Change on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment and violence rates

The Change the Record Coalition will today meet in Canberra to launch the 'Blueprint for Change'. This is the first time a broad range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous organisations have come together with a concrete plan for Federal, State and Territory Governments to change the record on soaring Aboriginal imprisonment rates and high levels of experienced violence.

The Blueprint urges a whole of government strategy, the setting of justice targets, and a commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, their organisations and representatives to drive solutions.

Co-Chair Shane Duffy said, "This Blueprint is the result of more than two years of collaboration between 16 leading peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies, legal organisations and human rights groups.

"When these key organisations come together with one voice, governments need to listen. There is no more time to waste. Australia's first peoples are being locked up at unprecedented rates, and experiencing high rates of violence."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are currently 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than non-Indigenous people, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are

34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence than non-Indigenous women.

Change the Record Co-Chair Kirstie Parker said, “This is more than bad statistics; these figures represent people – brothers, sisters, sons and daughters who are being separated from their families and need our support.

“We know the underlying factors behind these statistics, and our Blueprint makes clear the steps that all levels of government must take to get Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people out of prison and improve community safety for us all.

“There is an urgent need for federal leadership and a national multi-partisan approach to drive co-ordinated action across the country. Our Blueprint outlines concrete changes that Federal, State and Territory governments must make to laws and policies to both reduce the escalating numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being imprisoned, and improve community safety.

Mr Duffy said the Coalition urged the Federal Government to lead their State and Territory colleagues on this critical issue, and looked forward to working with all levels of government to put the Blueprint for Change into action.

The Blueprint highlights the need for justice targets to close the gap by 2040 both in the rates of imprisonment between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, with priority strategies for women and children.

These targets should be accompanied by a National Agreement which includes a reporting mechanism, as well as measurable sub-targets and a commitment to halve the gap in the above over-arching goals by no later than 2030.

The Blueprint also calls for the establishment of an independent central agency with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oversight, to co-ordinate a comprehensive, current and consistent national approach to related data collection and policy development.

Laws, policies and strategies around reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment and violence rates must be underpinned by a human-rights approach, and designed in consultation and partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Governments must also support capacity building for these communities and organisations, so that policies are underpinned by the principle of self-determination, respect, and recognition of the history of dispossession and trauma experienced by many communities.

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Note to Editors

Additional attributable quotes by members of the Change The Record Coalition:

National FVPLS Forum:

“The cost of family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is shocking – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely than non-Indigenous women to be hospitalised because of family violence. We must support our women to ensure their voices are not silenced, by providing the services that allow them to rebuild their lives.” – Antoinette Braybrook, National Convenor for the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum

Amnesty International Australia:

“Amnesty is known for its work around the world in in amplifying the voices of those who are marginalised and dispossessed. We acknowledge that the justice gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people in Australia is evidence we don’t need to look abroad to see marginalisation or dispossession. We must address this here and now.” – Tammy Solonec, Indigenous People's Rights Manager

ANTaR:

“ANTAR, as a national advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, is seriously concerned about the justice crisis that is leaving a generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people behind. Report after report highlights the need for government to act on the rates of incarceration and violence experienced by First Peoples. Government must now commit to implementing the Change the Record Blueprint for Change” - Andrew Meehan, National Director

Human Rights Law Centre:

“The crisis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment and experiences of violence continues as one of the most critical human rights challenges facing Australia. We can not let this continue – we must fight for change.” - Ben Schokman, Director of Advocacy

Oxfam Australia:

“The strength of the Blueprint for Change is that it does not try and offer a singular simplistic solution to what are complex problems. Instead it recognises that if we are truly going to change the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment and experiences of violence we need to tackle the issue on many fronts, in a co-ordinated and united way. This is the way forward.” – Justin McCaul, National Manager, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Peoples Program

Sisters Inside:

“The increasing rate of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly women, is horrifying. These are women who are the most disadvantaged, the most abused, and have the poorest health. These are women who do not belong in prison – they should be provided with support to ensure they do not end up there.” - Debbie Kilroy, CEO

Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos

“Far too many of our most vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people end up in the criminal justice system. We can do better to support our children and break the cycle of disadvantage.” – Andrew Jackomos

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 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*