

Over 100 organisations release statement calling for Royal Commission to be independent, and broader in scope.

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Today over 100 organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak representative bodies, have released an Open Statement welcoming Prime Minister Turnbull's Royal Commission into the horrific abuse of children in the Northern Territory, but calling for it to be conducted independently from the NT Government and for a broader inquiry into the youth justice system as a whole.

The strong leadership demonstrated by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in swiftly and decisively responding to the ABC's Four Corners episode on Monday night, which revealed a broken youth justice system is welcomed in the Statement.

Change the Record (CTR) Coalition Co-Chair Shane Duffy said, "Prime Minister Turnbull's commitment to establishing a Royal Commission to expose the horrific incidences of abuse at Don Dale is a welcome first step. It is clear that an initial investigation into Northern Territory detention must be conducted as a matter of priority and urgency".

"However it is imperative that the Royal Commission is conducted independent of the NT Government, to ensure that those involved with, and responsible for, the cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment of young people in the Northern Territory are held to account".

The Statement also points to the disproportionately high rates of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across the country. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are around 24 times more likely to be imprisoned than their non-Indigenous youth.

"The Royal Commission must encompass the entire NT youth justice system, and investigate the underlying factors that have led to the our young people coming in contact with the justice system in the first place" said Mr Duffy.

As a second step, the Open Statement calls for the Royal Commission to conduct a broader inquiry into the youth justice system and extend its Terms of Reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples' interaction with the youth justice system across all State and Territory jurisdictions.

"The issue of over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, is not confined to the Northern Territory. The Royal Commission provides us with opportunity for us to have a broader conversation about how to address some of these systemic issues."

The Open Statement also calls on the Australian Government to take immediate action, including the urgent ratification of OPCAT and setting of national justice targets.

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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:

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

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