

MEDIA RELEASE

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PM must act on crisis of Aboriginal children's imprisonment

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights ANTaR, called for the Federal Government to lead a national response to the crisis of Aboriginal children's imprisonment by adopting the Change the Record Campaign's National Plan of Action *Free to Be Kids*, launched at a Sea of Hands installation in front of Federal Parliament today.

National Director of ANTaR, Andrew Meehan said that the National Action Plan launched by the Change the Record Campaign set out a clear path for the Federal government to show leadership on the national issue of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's imprisonment.

Noting that just over a week ago the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory recommended a complete overhaul of the system that led to the appalling abuse of children in prison in the NT, Mr Meehan said that the systemic failures highlighted in the NT are occurring elsewhere.

"The over-imprisonment and abuse of Aboriginal children is happening all over the country and urgently requires national leadership."

"There have been reports and inquiries into abuse in Queensland, ACT, NSW, Western Australia and Victoria while the Royal Commission has been undertaking its work in the Northern Territory over the past eight months."

Mr Meehan noted that the Prime Minister himself had acknowledged that "many of the recommendations have wider implications for all jurisdictions."

"It could not be clearer that this is an issue that must be addressed across the whole country," Mr Meehan said.

"There is only one thing for the Prime Minister to do - lead a national response to this issue, working with COAG."

"The handballing of responsibility must stop."

“The failure to act on report after report, inquiry after inquiry must stop. It is up to the Prime Minister to act to stop the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from having their futures robbed.”

“As a member of the Change the Record Campaign, we brought our Sea of Hands to Canberra to demonstrate the strong community support for change on this issue. Nearly 400,000 Australians have joined ANTaR’s Sea of Hands movement. It is almost 20 years ago to the day that 140,000 hands were planted on the same lawns in front of our nation’s Parliament to show support for justice, rights and respect for First Peoples. We’ll keep coming back, supporting First Peoples, until change happens.”

ANTaR is a foundational member of the Change the Record Campaign and supported the development of the National Plan of Action Free to be Kids. ANTaR is the only 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 supported the development and launch of the Redfern Statement.

Media queries: Andrew Meehan, National Director ANTaR