



Health and legal services welcome Northern Territory Government commitment to improving services

The Northern Territory Royal Commission exposed a broken youth justice system, which left children more damaged than when they entered it. Recently, it was also revealed that 100% of children behind bars are Indigenous.

The Royal Commission provided a road map for change and the Northern Territory Government accepted, in principle, all 226 of its recommendations and promised to "overhaul" youth justice in the NT. There is a long way to go, but today the Northern Territory Government announced a number of important initiatives to improve the opportunities available to children to turn their lives around. We welcome this announcement, and will monitor the implementation of these important commitments to ensure they are delivered.

The measures aim to include:

- Aboriginal health services providing all primary medical help to Aboriginal kids in custody;
- new programs like AFL skills and umpire training;
- more input from experts in the areas of education, health, disability and mental health;
- mediators on hand to help resolve tensions and dispute;
- new reporting requirements when kids miss out on education; and
- sharing of information with children's legal representatives to ensure fairness and accountability.

The commitments will be implemented throughout 2019, with key milestones in May and August 2019.

'Overwhelmingly, it's Indigenous children who are locked up in the Northern Territory. We all remember the horrors that led to the Royal Commission. It's so important that Aboriginal health services are there to provide care to our kids and look out for their wellbeing. We hope that we will achieve that in Don Dale and Alice Springs in the coming months,' said John Paterson, CEO of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT).

'The Royal Commission provided a roadmap for change and we can't let it sit on the shelf gathering dust. The Government should listen to and work with Aboriginal people and their organisations to improve the lives of children caught up in the youth justice system. Today's announcement is a step in the right direction,' said Pricilla Atkins, CEO of the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA).

'Children belong in their communities, with their families and in classrooms. Today's announcement is an important step towards increasing the positive opportunities for children caught up in the youth justice system' said Suzan Cox QC, Director of the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC).



AMSANT, NAAJA and NTLAC welcome today's announcement and look forward to the full implementation of the Royal Commission's recommendations.

The Northern Territory Government's media release can be found here:
<http://mediareleases.nt.gov.au/mediaRelease/28947>.

For interviews or further information please call:

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