

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

## **NT Aboriginal organisations call for NT Government to be dissolved and demand input into Royal Commission**

**26 July 2016**

A coalition of Northern Territory Aboriginal organisations today called for the federal Parliament to step in to dissolve the NT Government, following the exposure of the NT Government's barbaric abuse of children in detention.

"Any government that enacts policies designed to harm children and enables a culture of brutalisation and cover-ups, surrenders its right to govern," said spokesperson John Paterson.

The federal Parliament has ultimate control over NT matters and can act to dissolve the current NT Government and bring on an urgent NT election.

"We also urge the Prime Minister to ensure the NT Government plays no role in the development or oversight of the Royal Commission.

It must be entirely independent of the NT Government, and chaired by an appropriate independent expert and must have Aboriginal representation from the NT.

Local organisations and those working in this sector must have input into the terms of reference. The terms of reference must:

- Encompass the entire NT youth justice system, not just issues relating to detention facilities;
- Examine all previous enquiries relating to youth justice in the NT for cover ups and uncover why the recommendations were not implemented.
- Not limit how far into the past the Commission can inquire.

We also call for further immediate interim actions:

- The Commonwealth must appoint an alternative provider of youth detention and child protection/out of home care for the NT. The NT Government cannot continue to deliver these services while our kids remain at risk.
- The youth currently on remand should also be removed from the Darwin and Alice Springs detention facilities immediately and placed in appropriate secure accommodation.
- The office of the NT Children's Commissioner must be appropriately and adequately resourced to perform her statutory duties.

“That harm is being done to our children and our community in our name is unacceptable. Those responsible, including ministers, advisers, bureaucrats and corrections employees need to be held to account”, spokesperson Olga Havnen said.

“The NT Government has led a concerted and sustained campaign demonising young people and to pass draconian laws inconsistent with recommendations made by successive inquiries, including those of the NT Children’s Commissioner.

“We are seeking urgent discussions with the Prime Minister to ensure this Royal Commission actually meets the needs of those most affected, and ultimately creates the momentum for reform of the entire youth justice system in the NT.”

**Media contacts**

AMSANT - John Paterson 0418 904 727

Danila Dilba - Olga Havnen 0448 840 085

NAAJA - Priscilla Collins 0427 045 665

Central Land Council - David Ross 0417 877 579

CAALAS - Eileen Van Iersel 0418 855 043

Northern Land Council – Joe Morrison