



Smarter Justice. Safer Communities.

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## **Over 100 organisations call on the Prime Minister to show national leadership on youth justice.**

Today more than 100 organisations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak representative bodies, community and legal groups, have published an Open Letter calling for the Prime Minister to show national leadership on youth justice. The letter has been released to coincide with the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory handing down its interim report today.

Change the Record (CTR) Co-Chair Shane Duffy said, “Since the horrific images of Don Dale were screened on Four Corners last year, the Royal Commission has heard countless more stories about disturbing abuse and mistreatment of young people in detention facilities, the vast majority being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.”

“However, the issue of over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, and abuse and mistreatment of young people in detention facilities, is not confined to the Northern Territory.”

“Today over 100 organisations have come together to say, enough is enough. It is time for us to have a national conversation about how to address some of these systemic issues” said Mr Duffy.

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are 25 times more likely to be sent to youth detention than their non-Indigenous counterparts, yet they make up just 5% of the national youth population.

The Open Letter calls on the Prime Minister to take immediate action, including working in partnership with State and Territory governments to set national justice targets through the Council of Australian Government’s ‘Closing the Gap’ framework, and committing to develop a resourced national plan of action on youth justice.

Co-Chair Antoinette Braybrook said, “This is a national crisis, which demands a national response. The Prime Minister must act without delay to drive coordinated action on this issue.”

“We need governments at all levels to focus on investing in effective community-led early intervention, prevention and diversion programs, which would ensure detention of children is a last resort” said Ms Braybrook.

The Open Letter also calls on the Prime Minister and his government to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to design and implement a national preventative mechanism against torture and mistreatment in detention as soon as possible, in line with the Government’s commitment to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT).

**Media Contact:** Shannon Longhurst for Shane Duffy and Antoinette Braybrook  
ph: 0409 711 061 / [shannon@changetherecord.org.au](mailto:shannon@changetherecord.org.au)