

MEDIA RELEASE

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Opportunity to build stronger future for Tasmania's youth

The Justice Reform Initiative has welcomed the announcement that the Tasmanian government will close the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Executive director Mindy Sotiri said the long-overdue decision opened an opportunity for Tasmania to lead the country in adopting an evidence-based approach for children and young people who become caught up in the criminal justice system.

"Children don't belong in prison," she said. "We're very glad to see that the closure of the Ashley centre is on the horizon, however we need to be very careful that we don't replicate a failed model in its replacement.

"This decision presents an opportunity for Tasmanian leaders to take a world-leading approach that will give children and young people who encounter the criminal justice system the best chance to avoid further contact with it.

"We know that the more people interact with the youth justice system, the greater the likelihood is that they will return, and the more likely that through this process, they will become disconnected from education, family, and other key anchors to their community.

"Evidence shows that there are real alternatives to our incarceration-reliant system that lead to better long-term results and genuinely improve community safety. We look forward to further consultation with the Tasmanian government on their plans for youth justice."

The Justice Reform Initiative is a multi-partisan alliance supported by more than 100 of our most eminent Australians, including two former Governors-General, former Members of Parliament from all sides of politics, academics, respected Aboriginal leaders, senior former judges, including High Court judges, and others who have added their voices to end Australia's dangerously high reliance on jails.

Our Tasmanian patrons include:

- Greg Barns SC, barrister, commentator and spokesperson on criminal justice for the Australian Lawyers Alliance
- The Honourable Lara Giddings, former Premier and Attorney General of Tasmania
- Adjunct Associate Professor Terese Henning, Former Director of the Tasmania Law Reform Institute
- Michael Hill, former Chief Magistrate of Tasmania and Former Acting Justice of the Supreme Court of Tasmania. Currently Adjunct Professor within the Faculty of Law at the University of Tasmania and Chair of the Just Deserts Drug Court Support Group.
- The Rt Revd Dr Chris Jones, Vicar General and Assistant Bishop Anglican Diocese of Tasmania and CEO of Anglicare Tasmania
- Christine Milne AO, former Senator for Tasmania and leader the Australian Greens and current Global Greens Ambassador
- The Rt Honourable Lord Mayor of Hobart, Councillor Anna Reynolds

- The Honourable Denise Swan, Former Minister (Community Development, Status of Women, Aboriginal Affairs, Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs, and Local Government) and Member of the Tasmanian House of Assembly
- Professor the Honourable Kate Warner AC, Head Patron, former Governor of Tasmania,
- Professor Rob White FASSA FANZSOC, Distinguished Professor of Criminology, School of Social Sciences, University of Tasmania
- The Honourable Jim Wilkinson, former President Tasmanian Legislative Council, President of the Tasmanian Football Board and former partner of the law firm Wallace Wilkinson & Webster

The Initiative respectfully acknowledges and supports the current and longstanding efforts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reduce the numbers of Indigenous people incarcerated in Australia and, importantly, the leadership role which Indigenous-led organisations such as Change the Record continue to play on this issue. We also acknowledge the work of many other individuals and organisations seeking change, such as those focused on the rate of imprisonment for women, people with mental health issues, people with disability and others.

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