



New South Wales
Council for
Civil Liberties

NSW COUNCIL FOR CIVIL LIBERTIES

STREET ADDRESS: SUITE 203, 105 PITT ST, SYDNEY, NSW 2000 AUSTRALIA
POSTAL ADDRESS: PO BOX A1386, SYDNEY SOUTH, NSW 1235

e: office@nswccl.org.au
p: 02 8090 2952
f: 02 8580 4633

www.nswccl.org.au

9 June 2015

Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion
Minister for Indigenous Affairs
Unit 1, 229 McMillans Road
Jingili, NT, 0810
Sent via email to nigel.scullion@ia.pm.gov.au

Cc: The Hon. Tony Abbott, MP
Prime Minister

Dear Minister,

The NSW Council for Civil Liberties strongly supports the continued operation of the Custody Notification Service (CNS) and is deeply concerned that the Government will cease funding this essential service on 30 June 2015.

The CNS has proved a vital, effective and low-cost service, acting as a lifeline for advice and support for indigenous people in custody. We understand there have been no Aboriginal deaths in custody in NSW/ACT since the service began in 2000.

In our view the incredibly sad and shameful confirmation by Amnesty International in their report this week, *A Brighter Tomorrow*, that Australia incarcerates indigenous children at one of the highest rates in the developed world should be more than enough to persuade the Government to rethink its position.

Given the shameful over-representation of indigenous people in Australia's prisons the Government should take note of the widespread view from those who work in this field that this effective and targeted service has proved itself to be of critical importance.

Such a vital service should not be subject to uncertain funding cycles. In 2013, when the future of the CNS was under threat, the then-Labor Government was forced by intense community pressure to continue funding.

It would be a severe indictment on this Government's commitment to Closing the Gap and reversing indigenous incarceration rates if the CNS was to cease under its tenure.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Lesley Lynch'.

Dr Lesley Lynch
NSWCCL Secretary