

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory

An alliance of the CLC, NLC, CAALAS, NAAJA and AMSANT

The Prime Minister
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via e-mail to: Malcolm.Turnbull.MP@aph.gov.au

26th July 2016

Dear Prime Minister,

RE: Royal Commission into the abuse of youths in the Northern Territory corrections system

The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory welcomes your swift decision to hold a Royal Commission into youth detention in the Northern Territory, following the shocking report on Four Corners last night.

We write to urge you to ensure that Aboriginal people and organisations are fully engaged in the process and that it is one that is entirely independent of the Northern Territory Government.

We draw your attention to the attached media release in which we call on the federal Parliament to dismiss the Northern Territory Government. We do not make this call lightly but any government that enacts policies designed to harm children and enables a culture of brutalisation and cover-ups, surrenders its right to govern.

In relation to the Royal Commission we would also like to make these specific requests of you:

1. Ensure that the Northern Territory Government has no role in the development or oversight of the Royal Commission, including the provision of funding or developing the terms of reference. We can have no confidence in the Northern Territory Government, given not only their protracted inaction in relation to the matters raised, but also the manner in which the public has been actively misled in relation to events.
2. The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory be given an opportunity to comment on the draft Terms of Reference.
3. That the Royal Commission be chaired by an independent expert and must have Aboriginal representation from the NT.

4. The terms of reference must necessarily be broader than the incidents exposed in the Four Corners program. It is vital that it considers issues closely related to the treatment of young people in detention, including:

- legislation and policies that underpin the treatment of young people in detention, including the use of force and isolation;
- the over-representation of Aboriginal young people in detention, especially on remand;
- the role of the Department of Children and Families in caring for Aboriginal young people who come in contact with the criminal justice system;
- the need for specialist approaches to the policing of young people;
- the availability of trauma support and counseling for Aboriginal young people in the community;
- examine all previous enquiries relating to youth justice in the NT for cover ups and uncover why the recommendations were not implemented; and
- not limit how far into the past the Commission can inquire.

5. It is imperative that Aboriginal organisations are properly funded to provide support to people in connection with the Royal Commission, including legal representation and counseling.

We look forward to working with your government to urgently address the systemic failures of the Northern Territory Government, and to ensure the success of this Royal Commission. Again, we thank you for your leadership in recognising the national importance of these issues.

Yours sincerely,



John Paterson
CEO
on behalf of APO NT:

David Ross Director CLC	Priscilla Collins CEO NAAJA	John Paterson CEO AMSANT	Eileen Vaniersal CEO CAALAS	Joe Morrison CEO NLC
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Contact:
Brionee Noonan (Policy Officer)
Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT
0488 006 680 or brionee.noonan@amsant.org.au