

Media Release

Date: Friday, 19th August 2016

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd – (ATSILS) has welcomed today’s announcement by the Queensland Government of an independent review into the State’s youth detention centres.

ATSILS commends the Government on their commitment to independence and calls for the terms of reference to be developed with significant engagement and oversight by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their representative organisations.

The announcement of the review by Attorney General Yvette D’ath late today follows the ABC’s 7.30 and Lateline reports exposing significant allegations of mistreatment of youth in the care of the state at Brisbane and Cleveland Youth Detention facilities.

The allegations were brought to light through a Freedom of Information request by Amnesty International Australia.

ATSILS CEO, Shane Duffy said, “a rapid response was required and the Government have shown responsible leadership in announcing the review today.”

“It is vitally important that the review be conducted independent of government to ensure the process has the confidence the community and we praise the government on their commitment to that.”

“As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be grossly over-represented in the juvenile justice system in Queensland it is equally important that the review’s terms of reference be defined in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure meaningful outcomes.”

“It is totally unacceptable that vulnerable young people are being subjected to this type of traumatic and abusive treatment whilst under the care of the state,” Mr. Duffy said.

ATSILS calls on the Queensland Government to take immediate steps to safe guard children from any further mistreatment in the states juvenile detention facilities.

More broadly it is time for all levels of government to work together and invest in coordinated intervention, prevention and rehabilitation initiatives that can more effectively divert our young people away from the criminal justice system and help them build a brighter future. With our young people 24x more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous youth nationally, ATSILS calls on all levels of government commit to an evidence based approach to justice reinvestment outlined in the Change the Record Coalition’s “Blueprint for Change”.
<https://changetherecord.org.au/blueprint-for-change>

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