

## Media Release

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### Queensland needs an independent body to investigate complaints against police officers to ensure greater transparency and community confidence in law enforcement.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) LTD (ATSILS) is appalled at the alleged behaviour of a police officer in Cunnamulla who was recently filmed threatening to ‘flog’ and ‘hurt’ a member of the community in the south west Queensland township.

ATSILS CEO Mr. Shane Duffy said, “If the investigation substantiates that the police officer indeed made the threats as alleged, then it would be difficult to justify any outcome other than the officer’s dismissal. The officer’s actions (if substantiated) not only undermine the Queensland Police Service’s (QPS) own documented ethical standards and the Queensland Public Service Code of Conduct, but also the local community’s expectations and confidence in law enforcement.

“Police officers are public servants who are entrusted with a range of powers and responsibilities critical to maintaining community safety. The community expects these powers and responsibilities will be exercised in line with the highest standards of professionalism given the level of training police receive and the important role they play in the community.”, Mr. Duffy said.

“If a citizen was to threaten a police officer in the same way this member of the public was threatened in this video, I would guarantee they would be charged. It should be without question that the same standards, in terms of criminal behaviour, should apply to the police as to the wider community”, Mr. Duffy said.

ATSILS understands an informal investigation into the incident is being undertaken by the QPS. Our communities have no confidence in the current process of police investigating public complaints against police internally. ATSILS has been calling for a legislative change to this process for decades in line with The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) Recommendation 226 which clearly outlines a way to deal with community confidence in relation to such matters.

Recommendation 226 states that in all jurisdictions the processes for dealing with complaints against police need to be urgently reviewed. The RCIADIC recommended that legislation should be based on the following principle amongst many others, specific to police - ***That complaints against police should be made to, be investigated by or on behalf of and adjudicated upon by a body or bodies totally independent of Police Services.*** An independent investigation benefits both the complainant and the police, it ensures greater transparency and thus trust in the police service in general.

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