

Media Release

Date: 10th November 2022

Another day and sadly another Aboriginal life has been lost in police custody.

The team at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSILS) are extremely saddened to hear of the death of a man in the Kowanyama Police Watchhouse on Wednesday November 9, 2022.

ATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said, “In this day and age, people should not still be dying in police watchhouses. This is another tragic loss of life; we extend our thoughts and deepest sympathies to the family of the deceased man. I have been in contact with the Mayor of Kowanyama and our Coronial lawyers will be respectfully providing support to the family to offer legal assistance.

“We back Mayor Sands call for transparency in the investigation of this death. The Crime and Corruption Commission will be providing independent oversight of the Police Ethical Standards Command investigation. We reiterate, police should not be investigating police,” Mr Duffy said.

It has been 31 years since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) handed down its 339 recommendations. Tragically there has been over five hundred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody recorded since this time.

Current government policies that continue to increase the presence of police in vulnerable communities is not a balanced solution to creating safer communities. ATSILS calls on the government to investment more in locally designed therapeutic responses (mental health, domestic violence & drug and alcohol services) to address the upstream causes of why people are offending and to divert them away from the justice system.

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