ATSILS
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd

Brisbane Office | ABN: 1111 6314 562
Level 5, 183 North Quay, Brisbane Qld 4000
PO Box 13035, George Street, Brisbane Qld 4003
07 3025 3888 | Freecall 24/7: 1800 012 255
07 3025 3800
info@atsils.org.au
www.atsils.org.au

28th January 2026

Inspector of Detention Services
Office of the Queensland Ombudsman
GPO Box 3314
Brisbane QLD 4000

By email: inspector@ombudsman.qld.gov.au

Dear Inspector of Detention Services,

Re: Inspection of Numinbah Correctional Centre

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the inspection of Numinbah Correctional Centre (**NCC**). In this submission, we have raised concerns about the lack of any Cultural Liaison Officers at NCC, which is unjust and harmful given the significant overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in custody and the critical role that such officers play in ensuring cultural safety within the correctional context in numerous ways, including, but not limited to: helping to bridge cultural and communication gaps between detainees and corrective staff; reducing miscommunications that could result in negative outcomes for the detainee; assisting with access to healthcare (preferably culturally appropriate healthcare); and protecting rights and procedural fairness of the detainee.

Preliminary consideration: Our background to comment

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Limited (ATSILS), is a community-based public benevolent organisation, established to provide professional and culturally competent legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Queensland. The founding organisation was established in 1973. We now have 25 offices strategically located across the State. Our Vision is to be the leader of innovative and professional legal services. Our Mission is to deliver quality legal assistance services, community legal education, and early intervention and

prevention initiatives which uphold and advance the legal and human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

ATSILS provides legal services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Queensland. Whilst our primary role is to provide criminal, civil and family law representation, we are also funded by the Commonwealth to perform a State-wide role in the key areas of Community Legal Education, and Early Intervention and Prevention initiatives (which include related law reform activities and monitoring Indigenous Australian deaths in custody). Our submission is informed by over five decades of legal practise at the coalface of the justice arena and we, therefore, believe we are well placed to provide meaningful comment, not from a theoretical or purely academic perspective, but rather from a platform based upon actual experiences.

Comments on the inspection of Numinbah Correctional Centre

ATSILS remains significantly concerned about the lack of any Cultural Liaison Officers at NCC.

It is fundamentally unjust that NCC operates without a dedicated Cultural Liaison Officer (**CLO**) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, considering the well-documented overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in custody. CLOs play a critical role in supporting detainees to maintain cultural connection, understand and exercise their rights, communicate safely with staff and services and access culturally appropriate healthcare and wellbeing supports (where this is possible, noting the widespread lack of access to culturally appropriate healthcare and wellbeing supports in the correctional setting). The absence of such a role at NCC exacerbates existing systemic disadvantage, increases the risk of miscommunication and harm and undermines the Centre's capacity to meet its obligations to provide culturally safe detention environments. This failure not only disregards the specific cultural, social and historical factors affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in custody, but also perpetuates inequitable treatment and compounds the trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander detainees within the correctional system.

We draw the Inspector's attention to the following human rights enshrined under the *Human Rights Act 2019* (**HR Act**) which we consider are infringed due to the prolonged absence of a CLO at NCC.

- Cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (section 28, HR Act) – Cultural Liaison Officers are often a key mechanism through which the cultural rights of a prisoner, as enshrined under section 28 of the HR Act, are practically supported. The absence of a CLO significantly impairs a detainee's ability to maintain cultural connection, access culturally safe supports and have their cultural needs understood and respected.

- Right to humane treatment when deprived of liberty (section 30, HR Act) – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons are disproportionately represented in custody and are more likely to have experienced intergenerational trauma and the complex and ongoing impacts of long-standing socio-economic disadvantage. There might also be language barriers at play. This can result in miscommunications between the detainee and corrective services staff, a misinterpretation of behaviour, reduced access to healthcare and wellbeing supports and increased distress and retraumatisation. Accordingly, a lack of a CLO can undermine the dignity and humane treatment that should be afforded to detainees.

- Right to equality before the law and non-discrimination (section 15, HR Act) – The lack of a CLO has disproportionate adverse impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees who have distinct cultural needs and face systemic disadvantage within the correctional system.

- Right to health services (section 37, HR Act) – CLOs play a critical role in facilitating access to healthcare, including mental health and social and emotional well-being services, in a culturally safe manner. The absence of a CLO can create barriers to effective healthcare access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, undermining the practical enjoyment of this right.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the inspection of Numinbah Correctional Centre.

Yours faithfully,

Shane Duffy - Chief Executive Officer