



7 NOVEMBER 2018

STATEMENT ON EVENTS AT DON DALE YOUTH DETENTION CENTRE

It has been twelve months since the Royal Commission handed down its report into the protection and detention of children in the Northern Territory. This week's disturbing events are further proof that locking children and young people up in places like Don Dale does not prepare them for life as a responsible adult. Incarceration is not a road to rehabilitation.

Aboriginal children and young people represent upwards of 95% of detainees in NT youth detention facilities. In recent times Aboriginal children and young people made up 100% of detainees in Don Dale.

Making Justice Work urges the Northern Territory Government to immediately create opportunities for Aboriginal organisations and communities to contribute to youth detention governance and operational decision making within Territory Families. Handing back decision-making powers to Aboriginal organisations, communities and people will result in sustainable, local and culturally-specific responses and solutions.

The events at Don Dale present another opportunity to consider proven youth justice models such as those in Spain, Norway, UK and France. From day one when a child comes into a youth justice facility, the focus must be on rehabilitation and education, not punishment.

The punishment model has never worked. Youth justice facilities must normalise the life of the child and take a staged and supported approach to prepare them for the outside world.

Don Dale is a decommissioned adult prison. It was never designed to support and care for children and young people; it will continue to present a risk to the children and young people detained there, and the workforce that support them, until alternative purpose-built therapeutic facilities are operational.

The small number of children and young people requiring separation from the community in youth detention must have every opportunity to maintain access to family, community, culture, language and country, as well as support services, education, training, work, and recreation opportunities.

Making Justice Work is dismayed that following this incident, all the children in Don Dale, including those who are not alleged to have been criminally involved in this week's incident, were detained at the Darwin watch house for over 24 hours without the opportunity to apply for release on bail, or in some cases access to legal assistance.

Making Justice Work calls on the Northern Territory Government to urgently implement the Royal Commission recommendations to:

1. raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility
2. reduce the number of children on remand by repealing the offence of breach of bail and ensuring youth-specific pro-bail considerations
3. implement evidence based, culturally-strengthening early intervention, prevention and diversion programs

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