



**Danila Dilba**<sup>®</sup>  
Health Service

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **SENATE INQUIRY REPORT ACKNOWLEDGES HIGH PREVALENCE OF FASD IN YOUTH DETENTION**

Danila Dilba Health Service welcomes the release of the Senate's report on effective approaches to prevention, diagnosis, and support for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) (17 March 2021). Danila Dilba provides comprehensive primary health services within the Darwin/Palmerston region, including to many children and families impacted by FASD or other neurodevelopmental impairments.

The release of the Senate's report the day before National Close The Gap Day provides a timely reminder of the tangible ways the government can fulfil its commitment to address the health gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.

The report highlights the need to incorporate FASD prevention, assessment, and management into a comprehensive primary health care model. In particular, the Senate Committee recognises the importance of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) like Danila Dilba in delivering culturally appropriate, holistic care to families affected by FASD.

Danila Dilba's Head of Clinical Governance, Dr Andrew Webster, gave evidence to the inquiry about the lack of culturally appropriate assessment, therapeutic interventions, and support for children with FASD and their families.

"ACCHOs can provide a 'one-stop shop' within a trusted service rather than families having to go through the process of diagnosis and therapy with multiple providers," said Dr. Webster.

"Sadly, due to the barriers to assessment, many children suffering from FASD or other impairments do not get a diagnosis, and so are unable to receive the supports that they need.

"It is these children that we then unfortunately see coming to the attention of the child protection and justice systems." said Dr. Webster.

The Senate Committee's report also highlights the high prevalence of FASD amongst children in the youth justice system and made several recommendations to address this.



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Danila Dilba, which provides primary health care at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, has been calling for reforms to better respond to the complex needs of children in detention in the NT.

‘It is absolutely clear to our staff that several of the children in Don Dale today should be in a therapeutic facility, not a detention centre,’ said Dr. Webster.

The report found that ‘conventional sentencing and correctional facilities are often inappropriate for people with FASD’ and recommends the need for ‘diversionary programs and alternative therapeutic facilities’, including looking to international alternatives.

Late last year Danila Dilba applied to the Commonwealth Government for additional funding for an early intervention service model that provides multidisciplinary, holistic and wraparound support services - a model consistent with the Senate Committee’s recommendations. Danila Dilba was disappointed to recently learn that we were unsuccessful in this funding application.

“We look forward to working with the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments, as well as other health service providers, to implement these crucial recommendations and improve the health outcomes of Darwin’s First Nations communities,” said Danila Dilba CEO Olga Havnen.

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