

Media release

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NNTC: 30 years on, deaths in custody a national shame

Three decades on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, the rate of Indigenous incarceration and deaths in custody continues to be one of our country's greatest shames, said the National Native Title Council (NNTC).

Since the 1991 Royal Commission, at least a further 474 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have died in police custody. Research from *The Guardian* has found that Indigenous peoples who died in custody were "more likely to not have been charged with any crime" and were "three times more likely to not receive all required medical care, when compared to non-Indigenous people".

The Royal Commission made 339 recommendations, of which more than one hundred have not been implemented.

NNTC CEO Mr Jamie Lowe said:

"At the time of the Royal Commission, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples made up 14 percent of the prison population – we are now 29 percent, despite comprising only 3 percent of the population. That is a national crisis."

"We don't need another commission, we don't need more policy analysis, we need action. All 339 recommendations must be implemented in full and that takes political will and strong leadership. Australia seems to be missing both."

"What is crucial is how we lower the rate of Indigenous incarceration by ending the reliance on punitive justice measures for marginalised people, which at its core is a symptom of racist policing. Among the Royal Commission's recommendations were culturally appropriate and community-delivered justice measures. While we have an enormous task at hand, this is not rocket science. The answers are all there, they just need to be implemented."

The National Native Title Council stands in support of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples impacted not only by deaths in custody, but by a justice system underpinned by structural racism. We call on state and federal governments to implement the 1991 Royal Commission's recommendations in full.

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