

## First Nations voices reveal the truth of Australia's Incarceration Nation

*"We have a problem ... stop looking away."* Karina Hogan, journalist and Sisters Inside Board Director

*"That's someone's child, someone's father, mother, uncle, aunty, cousin, grandmother, grandparent..."* Keenan Mundine, Co-Founder and Ambassador, *Deadly Connections and Justice Services Limited*

*"We started out as a penal colony, and we've continued to be one ever since."* Olga Havnen, CEO, *Danila Dilba Health Service*

*"Someone dies... and there is no consequence."* Apryl Watson, daughter of Tanya Day

*"It's an injustice to have this country's original inhabitants 13 times more likely to end up in prison."* Professor Don Weatherburn, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, Executive Director of the Judicial Commission of New South Wales 1988-2019

**\*\* VIEW TRAILER [HERE](#) - PLEASE NOTE VIEWERS MAY FIND THIS CONTENT DISTRESSING\*\* \*\*INTERVIEWS AVAILABLE \*\***

Every day, thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia wake up behind the bars of Australian prisons. Children live out their childhood in juvenile detention centres, hundreds of kilometres away from their family. Families continue to fight for justice and accountability for the deaths of their once imprisoned relatives, while the calls for solutions which empower Indigenous Australians to drive the change needed become louder.

*Incarceration Nation* lays bare the story of the continued systemic injustice and inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on their own land, told by Indigenous Australians, experts and academics. Premiering on free to air television on Sunday 29 August at 8:30pm, **National Indigenous Television (NITV)** is proud to bring this important documentary to Australian screens.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are amongst the most incarcerated people in the world.<sup>1</sup> Whilst representing 3.3 per cent of the Australian population<sup>2</sup>, Indigenous men make up 27 per cent of

<sup>1</sup><https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0-2016-Main%20Features-Aboriginal%20and%20Torres%20Strait%20Islander%20prisoner%20characteristics-5>

<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/law/aboriginal-prison-rates>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/profile-of-indigenous-australiansconsulting/assets/indigenous-incarceration-mav17.pdf>



prisoners<sup>3</sup> and Indigenous women constitute 34 per cent of prisoners<sup>4</sup>. Approximately 65 per cent of incarcerated children aged between 10 and 13 in Australia are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples<sup>5</sup>, while Indigenous youth make up 55 per cent of Australia's youth prison population. There have been at least 478 Indigenous deaths in custody in Australia from 1991 to 2021<sup>6</sup> - and no criminal convictions for the accused. *Incarceration Nation* puts First Nations voices front and centre, as they fight for change, visibility and equality.

Writer and director and Guugu Yimithirr man **Dean Gibson** explores the firsthand devastation by those affected, meets those who are trying to make a difference and discusses this systemic problem with some of our nation's brightest minds. His mission? To find out how this issue has reached crisis point - so much so, that it has been recognised internationally as a human rights issue<sup>7</sup>, yet isn't at the top of the national agenda.

This issue is explored through archive footage and interviews with experts and academics including Federal Circuit Court Judge **Matthew Myers**, Australia's Human Rights Commissioner from 2009 - 2016 **Mick Gooda**, barrister **Joshua Creamer**, **Associate Professor Chelsea Watego**, **Professor Don Weatherburn**, author **Amy McGuire** and lawyer **Teela Reid**. *Incarceration Nation* also gives voice to those for whom this is lived experience - **Keenan Mundine**, **Carly Stanley** as well as the **Dungay**, **Fisher**, **Day** and **Hickey** families who each share the trauma of losing a family member whilst they were in custody. Through these perspectives, *Incarceration Nation* reflects on Australia's history, and how massacres, child removals, stolen wages, denial of education and over-policing, racism and systemic bias have continued to drive overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the criminal justice system, and the devastating impact it continues to have.

NITV's Head of Commissioning and Programming, **Kyas Hepworth** said: "*Incarceration Nation* will ignite a timely and crucial conversation about Australia today, and what we hope may change for its future. For many Indigenous Australians, these are stories we have felt and unfortunately, we have known. The story of incarceration in Australia from a Blak perspective may open an unfamiliar discussion for some, but an important one that needs to be had.

"As Australia's dedicated First Nations broadcaster, our hope is that the voices and stories of those featured, and the many more they represent across Australia, are heard, understood and resonate long beyond broadcast."

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/prisoners-australia/latest-release#aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-prisoners>

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.alrc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/final\\_report\\_133\\_amended1.pdf](https://www.alrc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/final_report_133_amended1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup><https://www.hrlc.org.au/news/2020/7/27/australian-governments-continue-to-fail-kids-by-refusing-to-raise-the-age-at-which-children-can-be-locked-in-prison>

<sup>6</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/ng-interactive/2018/aug/28/deaths-inside-indigenous-australian-deaths-in-custody>  
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jul/14/familv-of-aboriginal-man-who-died-in-custody-sav-covid-restrictions-prevented-them-visiting-him>

<sup>7</sup><https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22118&LangID=E>



Writer and director **Dean Gibson** said: “Australia was founded by the English with one clear purpose - to create a prison island. Over 200 years later, not much has changed. Rather than housing criminals from England, we are filling our jails with our most vulnerable and disadvantaged population.

“Families live with the trauma of losing loved ones who have been in police custody or imprisoned, and that trauma continues when no-one is held accountable. No justice, no peace. *Incarceration Nation* will be a national conversation starter that will challenge Australia and the justice system.”

NITV will also air a suite of programming that examines the issues around Indigenous incarceration in Australia.

At 8:30pm on Monday 23 August on *Living Black*, **Karla Grant** speaks with justice reformer **Debbie Kilroy** about how she is standing up for women behind bars, paying unpaid fines for prisoners and why she thinks a world without prisons is possible.

On Tuesday 24 August at 7:30pm, *The Point* will air a special feature interview with **Dean Gibson**, as well as extensive coverage of on-going death in custody trials.

Then on Monday 30 August at 8:30pm on *Living Black*, **Karla Grant** will speak with youth justice advocate **Keenan Mundine** about how he turned his life around from being an orphan to a life in the criminal justice system to helping youth at risk of incarceration.

*Incarceration Nation* will be available to stream on **SBS On Demand**, with subtitled versions available in Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. The program will also be audio described on NITV.

**SBS** will also air *Incarceration Nation* as part of the *Australia Uncovered* documentary series later this year.

*Incarceration Nation* is a **Bacon Factory Films** and **Bent 3 Land** production. Principal production investment from **Screen Australia's First Nations Department** in association with NITV. Financed with support from **Screen Queensland, Documentary Australia Foundation** and **The Post Lounge**.

Join NITV on Sunday 29 August at 8:30pm for this important documentary.

**Join the conversation #IncarcerationNation**

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