



25 November 2021

Statement from John Paterson and Amnesty International Australia

AMSANT and Amnesty International Australia are issuing this joint statement to clarify our united concerns about a recent communication issued by Amnesty UK.

John Paterson, CEO of AMSANT said "I am extremely disappointed that Amnesty International UK has chosen to believe and spread false information about what is happening in the Katherine area of the Northern Territory of Australia with respect to involvement by the Australian Defence Force and others, without first consulting Aboriginal community-led organisations.

False information from social media is dangerous and corrosive to our communities but easily avoided by talking to the "community-led health organisations" that Amnesty seeks to defend, as they assert:

"We urge Territory and Federal governments to work with the community-led health organisations to provide resources and information in language to all communities so First Nations peoples can make informed choices about their healthcare based on the best evidence available."

Amnesty International Australia National Director Sam Klintworth said, "We're very disappointed that Amnesty UK re-issued a release that we at Amnesty Australia were very careful to ensure was doing precisely the opposite of feeding the spread of harmful information. The addition of the headline which was not in the original statement suggesting the ADF was "inflicting trauma" completely changed the sentiment of the statement which meant to convey Amnesty Australia's full support of vaccine access and the crucial work of groups such as AMSANT and we are deeply sorry for the distress this has caused".

Mr Paterson said "Amnesty UK's misrepresentation of the work of the Australian Defence Force personnel in assisting our "community-led health organisations" is closer to the extreme misinformation currently circulating on social media and required an immediate correction".

AMSANT and Amnesty International Australia commit to continue to work together to improve health and human rights outcomes for people across the NT where appropriate.

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