



Over-incarceration of Indigenous people in the ACT continues

ACTCOSS and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services joint media release, Friday 28 January 2022

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services and the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) have today welcomed news that the average daily number of prisoners in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) has gone down but expressed deep concern about the ongoing over-incarceration of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.

The Productivity Commission's [Report on Government Services \(RoGS\)](#) today highlighted:

- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people make up less than 2% of the general population in the ACT, but 24.4% of the population in the AMC
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are imprisoned at 19 times the rate of non-Indigenous people, well above the national average ratio of 16
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people are subject to community corrections orders at 12 times the rate of non-Indigenous people and have a much lower completion rate of 69% compared with 78%.

ACTCOSS CEO Dr Emma Campbell said: "The scale of this problem is enormous. The proportion of prisoners who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the ACT has doubled over the last ten years. We need to urgently address this problem by investing

in community-controlled organisations for health, housing, drug and alcohol treatment services and justice.

“The ACT has Australia’s highest rate of recidivism for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, with 91% of detainees having experienced prior imprisonment. By not addressing the systemic causes of over-incarceration, we are setting people up to fail over and over again.”

Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services CEO Julie Tongs OAM said: “It’s clear that whatever the ACT Government is doing to address Aboriginal incarceration rates in Canberra is not working. We are calling on the government to establish a Royal Commission into Indigenous disadvantage in the ACT.

“We need to examine the myriad and complex factors that have led to these appalling outcomes for Aboriginal peoples in the ACT, including a lack of housing, a lack of access to specialist and mental health services and high rates of children in out-of-home care. This is not just a problem in our prison, but across the whole community. We need a whole-of-government response that takes our voices and our pain seriously,” said Ms Tongs.

**For more information or comment, please contact
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