

10 October 2018

Dear Prime Minister

We feel compelled to write to you following the recent tabling in Parliament of the ALRC's Report *Pathways to Justice—An Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*. The Report is measured, thoroughly researched and accurate but also deeply disturbing. We believe the evidence in the ALRC Report, which confirms decades of research and inquiries and reveals the most recent extreme over-incarceration rate of the most vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, men and women, must be an unequivocal call to action. It is unconscionable that prisons across Australia should continue to be used in this way.

The ALRC's recommendations must be implemented. This can be a turning point for the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, that in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and leaders, could agree to implement the recommendations and end the terrible scourge of mass imprisonment of Indigenous Australians. Although criminal justice and corrections are State and Territory responsibilities, the Commonwealth, with its particular responsibility for the health and welfare of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, should take a lead.

We note that the ALRC's recommended way forward resonates with one of the important messages from the Uluru Statement from the Heart:

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness*.

We look forward to your and your Government's response to us and to seeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Report.

Sincerely

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