



MEDIA RELEASE

Children must be protected, not imprisoned

Children's Ground condemns the Northern Territory Government legislation lowering the age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10.

This law exposes more First Nations children to new trauma and punitive incarceration and fails to address community needs and safety.

It violates the international standard for children's human rights and is dangerously detrimental to the development and wellbeing of a child.

This legislation will reinforce pathways to reoffending and has the potential to create greater harm and risk for all Territorians.

This is not the answer to the needs of our children and our community

We must care for our children, not criminalise them.

Throughout Alice Springs and the Northern Territory, First Nations children and young people wake up each day to racism, biases, exclusion and discrimination, compounded by the long-term neglect and trauma resulting from decades of government failure.

We continue to see expanded policy and increased funding for the Northern Territory Police Force.

We have seen no change in the status quo.

First Nations children in the Northern Territory are some of the most imprisoned in Australia. In March this year the Australian Government reported that on an average day in 2022-23 in the Northern Territory, of all young people under youth justice supervision aged 10 and over, 92% were Indigenous.

Our children are critically overrepresented in the justice system. This new legislation will only make outcomes worse.

Year-on-year First Nations communities continue to offer solutions, and they continue to be ignored. It is reprehensible.

We need support for evidence-based solutions that can make real long-term change. Government must work with communities and invest in whole scale prevention at a community level, run and led by community.

There must be real investment in our young people and their future, not in their incarceration and harm.

We can prevent crime. We can make communities safer for first Nations and non-First Nations alike.

Our children must have tangible opportunities and a sense of hope for their future.

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