



## MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

### **Public transport should uphold dignity and inclusion for all**

#### *Attributable to Children's Ground*

Children's Ground is deeply concerned by reports that public buses in Darwin are displaying signage indicating people with soiled or dirty clothing may be refused entry and service. This type of messaging has serious consequences for people experiencing homelessness, poverty or marginalisation.

Public transport is a basic service. It should be safe, inclusive and available to everyone. Policies or practices that allow for discretionary exclusion based on appearance or perceived hygiene risk reinforcing harmful stereotypes and creating barriers to essential services.

For many in First Nations communities, especially those living rough and without access to basic washing facilities or adequate clothing resources, they are at risk of being penalised and excluded from basic public services. Punishing and excluding people due to the impact of systemic neglect and disadvantage is discrimination.

The government carries the responsibility to ensure that all public services operate without discrimination and with access and fairness. That responsibility extends to making sure people can access transport with dignity and without fear of being turned away.

This development is taking place at the same time as other concerning announcements from the Northern Territory Government. Last week, the government confirmed a 12-month trial that will allow members of the public to buy and carry pepper spray. The government is also training public safety officers to become armed NT Police officers. These officers will carry guns, wear NT Police uniforms and be tasked with targeting antisocial behaviour.

Together, these decisions reflect an increasing reliance on surveillance and force. They do not address the structural conditions that lead to hardship and inequality. They create fear rather than safety and drive people further to the margins of public life.

Children's Ground works every day with children, families and Elders to build futures that are safe, connected and led by community. We see what happens when families are denied access to support or when young people feel they are not welcome in public spaces.

Decisions about transport, policing and public safety must reflect the realities and rights of all people.

Children's Ground calls on the Northern Territory Government to ensure that public transport and other essential services are safe, non-discriminatory and inclusive. Equity and justice must guide every decision that affects our communities.

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