



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Statement on NT Government's amendment to Youth Justice Regulations

Attributable to a Children's Ground spokesperson

Children's Ground strongly opposes the Northern Territory Government's latest amendments to the Youth Justice Regulations 2006. These changes mark another punitive shift that fails to address the underlying causes of youth behaviour and instead reinforce cycles of harm and incarceration.

The Northern Territory Government continue to target the symptoms of social distress while neglecting the root causes. Our young people have grown up amid systemic disadvantage: in communities marked by economic hardship, food insecurity, housing stress, racism, intergenerational trauma and police violence. They are the systems most vulnerable casualties.

We are witnessing an ongoing pattern of top-down, reactionary policymaking that disregards the knowledge, leadership and lived experience of First Nations people. Instead of strengthening community-based systems of care, governments continue to distance children from support and place them deeper within punitive systems that repeatedly fail.

Criminalising children will not create safer communities. It only deepens trauma and reinforces cycles of harm. The real work lies in building strong foundations in culture, in family, and in community. That is where change begins. Children's Ground demonstrates what is possible when children grow up strong in their culture, supported by their families, and surrounded by opportunity instead of punishment.

We call on the NT Government to reverse these amendments and commit to genuine partnership with First Nations communities. Justice begins with children being safe, seen, valued and supported, on Country, in their languages and with their families. It begins with a system that invests in prevention, not prison.

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