



Central Australian Aboriginal Congress

ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823

Media Release

17 November 2017

Time to commit to action after NT Royal Commission

Today, Congress welcomes the release of the final report from Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

“We commend the findings and recommendations of the Royal Commission, particularly where it is apparent that the experiences of those young people and their families were taken into account, along with the submissions from key Aboriginal community controlled organisations and expert evidence from all over the world about what really works” Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Chief Executive Officer, Donna Ah Chee said.

“We know that many young people who appear before the courts come from traumatised backgrounds, which in many cases has caused their offending. As a community we need to learn to ask “what’s happened to you?” rather than “what’s wrong with you?”

“We also know that the 'get tough' rhetoric in relation to youth offending does not work and that a preventative and therapeutic approach is what is required. This point was articulated by Commissioner White today drawing on evidence from all over the world. Commissioner White also made clear that a paradigm shift to a treatment and rehabilitation approach rather than a “lock them up” punitive approach could save the NT more than \$300 million per year in ten years.

Congress welcomes Commissioner Gooda's impassioned plea for change acknowledging that throughout the Territory he heard that Aboriginal parents everywhere are ready for change and there is an acceptance that there is a need to do better.

Congress was pleased to see the major recommendations in our submission accepted including the need to increase the minimum age for criminality from 10 to 12, and the need to establish small scale secure care rehabilitation facilities for young people in need whilst also ensuring our young people are diverted away from the criminal justice system.

“The journey to this point has been a long one for those affected, beginning not just with the events that precipitated the Royal Commission. This report is the product of every similar enquiry, and every action – and inaction – that

has taken place before this in our history.

“Recently, the NT Government has shown their commitment to tackling many of the issues that affect young people today including early childhood and alcohol.

“Congress looks forward to working with the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments and other leading Aboriginal organisations, including AMSANT and APONT to ensure that the recommendations detailed in this report do not just sit on the shelf, but are implemented in a timely manner with Aboriginal communities and organisations at the forefront of decision making and delivery.