



## NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DRUG AND ALCOHOL COMMITTEE

### MEDIA RELEASE

#### **Cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services may result in more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ending up in prison**

Federal Government announcements on cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services comes at a time when the incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at an alarmingly high rate. These rates have been steadily increasing over the last twenty years. In particular, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in prison has increased dramatically with the rate per population of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander women in prison having increased by over 10 per cent between 2006 and 2009.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are 14 times more likely to be in prison than other Australians.

Time spent in prison is fraught with many risks to offender's health and wellbeing. Offenders also have disproportionately higher rates of serious mental illness and substance use and their imprisonment has far reaching implications on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

The National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) Chair, Assoc Prof Ted Wilkes, said "Given Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services' relationship and understanding of the problems facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people appearing in our criminal justice system their role in providing important advice and information on effective policies to reduce these unacceptably high levels must continue. Effective policy is reliant on good information and analysis and the Government needs to articulate how it will achieve this without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services being in place."

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