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Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee (2 pages)

Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System

Statement of Position

Youth incarceration must be abolished. Locking children in cold, isolating cells is not justice—it is institutional harm. The current system punishes vulnerability and trauma instead of healing it. This inquiry must call for a complete end to youth incarceration and replace it with environments that restore, educate, and empower.

Why Youth Are Being Incarcerated

Young people are being detained because they are failed by the systems around them. Poverty, family breakdown, trauma, and lack of opportunity push them into conflict with the law. The justice system responds with punishment instead of support. This affects all youth—Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike—and it must stop.

Proposed Reform

I propose a total replacement of youth incarceration with a welcoming, communal rehabilitation model:

- **No more cold cells:** Children should never be locked in sterile, punitive environments.
- **Create family-style healing spaces:** These should reflect community values, emotional safety, and cultural connection.

- **Boot camp-style activities:** Physical challenges, teamwork, and discipline can build confidence and resilience.
- **Embedded learning and skills programs:** Education, vocational training, and emotional development must be central.
- **Community-led governance:** Local people should run these spaces, creating jobs and ownership in the healing process.

This model is for *all* youth—not just Indigenous children. Every young person deserves a second chance, a safe space, and a path forward.

Global Evidence for Reform

Countries around the world have shown that youth incarceration is not necessary:

- **Finland:** Reduced youth detention dramatically by integrating social services and family-based care.
- **Norway:** Uses supported living communities instead of prisons, with only a handful of youth detained annually.
- **New Zealand:** Applies Māori-led restorative justice, reducing reoffending through family group conferencing.
- **Germany:** Resolves most youth offences outside court, focusing on education and mediation.
- **United States (select states):** Closed youth prisons and replaced them with therapeutic campuses focused on healing.

These models prove that when you remove children from jail and place them in supportive environments, outcomes improve—for youth, families, and society.

Final Call

Australia must end youth incarceration. Replace it with environments that heal, teach, and uplift. Let this inquiry be the moment we choose compassion over punishment—for every child, in every community.

Respectively Yours

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