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The Secretary
House Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

The National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee (NIDAC) welcomes the opportunity to provide advice into the *Inquiry into the high level of involvement of Indigenous juveniles and young adults in the criminal justice system*.

As the leading voice in Indigenous alcohol and drug policy, NIDAC is auspiced by the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) to provide expert advice to the Federal Government on Indigenous alcohol and other drug misuse, its harm, consequences and how it can be addressed.

NIDAC is particularly concerned with the over-representation of Indigenous young people in the juvenile justice systems and the links to alcohol and drug misuse.

To assist the House Standing Committee's deliberations, NIDAC has attached a copy of its recent paper *Bridges and Barriers – addressing Indigenous incarceration and health* paper (Attachment A). We believe that if the recommendations of this paper are implemented, rates of young Indigenous incarceration could be substantially reduced. Indeed, the uptake of these recommendations could provide a unique opportunity for governments to make a difference in the lives of young Indigenous people and break the cycle of Indigenous offending.

In addition to this paper, NIDAC has outlined some key principles for the Inquiry to consider in its future course of action.

Key Principles

- The 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendation to enforce the principle that "Indigenous incarceration should be utilized only as sanction of last resort" should be a constant key reminder that alternative ways of thinking are need to reduce Indigenous incarceration.
- Young Indigenous Australians have a right to a say in the development of initiatives that affect them and should be involved in the consultation, design and implementation of initiatives that specifically target their health, safety and wellbeing.
- Young Indigenous people have a right to quality health services and treatment; this includes the identification and assessment of alcohol and other drug, mental health, disability, brain injury, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and other social and behavioural problems for young Indigenous Australians entering or about to enter the justice and correctional systems.

Also attached for your information, is a paper developed by NIDAC on some current best practices (*Attachment B*), some of which are aimed at prevention and addressing the underlying causes of young Indigenous incarceration.

NIDAC actively looks forward to working with the government on this issue and trusts that you will find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Ted Wilkes
Chair, National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee
Australian National Council on Drugs

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