

## Media Release

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### **Another death in custody due to human rights breaches?**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (QLD) Ltd is appalled at the state of play for children and juveniles currently languishing in police watch houses across Queensland. It is totally unacceptable that such vulnerable young people are being subjected to this type of traumatic treatment whilst under the care of the state. Holding kids in these facilities is extremely dangerous and simply creates an unsafe environment where another death in custody is more likely to occur due to human rights abuses.

ATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said, “we welcome Amnesty International Australia’s continued efforts to stand up for Queensland kids caught up in the state’s dysfunctional youth justice system”.

“We have been calling for reform in this space for some time and the research undertaken by Amnesty International Australia that informed last night’s 4 Corners program, once again shines much-needed light on the disturbing human rights crisis we are dealing with.”

Mr Duffy said, “with the state’s youth detention centres overflowing, it is critical that we look beyond mere criminal justice responses to address the complex issues these kids face. After all you can’t arrest your way out of social problems. We need more therapeutic early intervention, prevention and diversion programs to address the underlying factors fuelling juvenile offending. Magistrates desperately need more sentencing alternatives to stem the flow of kids into detention and the State Government needs to undertake the necessary legislative and public policy reforms to make these types of programs available to the judiciary as a matter of priority.”

“We can’t simply stand idly by while more and more vulnerable kids pour into police watch houses. These short sighted, band aid measures set everyone up to fail and they do nothing to break the cycle of offending or support these kids in finding a path to a brighter future. They simply exacerbate the abuse of young people often caught up in the child protection and youth justice system because of fleeing abusive situations in the first place,” Mr Duffy said.

As a matter of urgency ATSILS calls on the Queensland Government to take immediate steps to remove all children and juveniles being detained in police watch houses. These facilities are no place for kids and are no place to respond to the combination of medical, disability, mental health and child protection issues many are dealing with. Increased resourcing for supervised bail accommodation support services is urgently needed along with greater access to holistic therapeutic services proven to address the underlying drivers of offending behaviour.

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