



Don Harwin
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Mark Speakman
Attorney General
Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday, 13 October 2021

CLOSING THE GAP FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE IN CUSTODY

Reducing the number of Aboriginal people in prison and improving the health and safety of people in custody are the focus of a renewed commitment by the NSW Government.

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Don Harwin said the Government's response to *The high level of First Nations people in custody and oversight and review of deaths in custody* report demonstrates its holistic, statewide approach to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people.

"The overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the justice system remains a true source of shame for this country. Every death that occurs when a person is in custody is a tragedy for loved ones left behind," Mr Harwin said.

"The National Agreement on Closing the Gap provides us with the framework to tackle the deep-rooted causes of Aboriginal disadvantage and represents a fundamental change to the way we work with Aboriginal partners to achieve meaningful, permanent outcomes."

The Government response recognises that systemic changes and increased accountability are required to close the gap, including:

- Releasing the [NSW Implementation Plan](#), setting out the first roadmap for closing the gap;
- Commencing a [Thematic Review of Aboriginal Deaths in Custody](#) to review and improve processes related to deaths in custody in Corrective Services NSW;
- Boosting funding and support for the Coroner's Jurisdiction, including a new full-time coroner;
- Expanding court services and programs, including the NSW Drug Court;
- Investments to remove hanging points in correctional facilities;
- Reviewing health services in correctional facilities, and improving support for mental health and people with disabilities; and
- Improving support for people leaving custody.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said that while the NSW Government is making record investments across the justice system, much more has to be done.

"We can, and we must, do better. We will continue to work hand-in-hand with Aboriginal communities to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the prison population and increase their safety when they are in custody," Mr Speakman said.

“This is a complex issue, intertwining the multi-generational disadvantage faced by First Nations people in housing, education and health and well-being.

“We acknowledge how difficult it must have been for those who have lost loved ones to come forward to tell of their grief and suffering. We are continuing to listen to those voices as we work together to make a long-lasting difference.”

The Government’s response is available on the [NSW Parliament website](#).

MEDIA: Duncan McNab | Minister Harwin | 0424 282 091