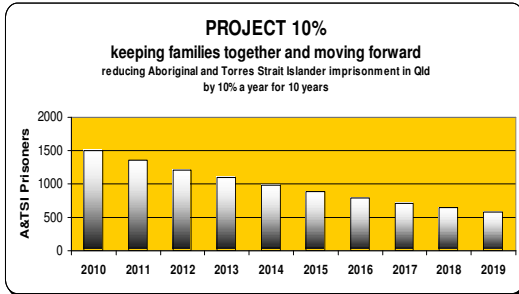




PROJECT 10%



**Reducing imprisonment
rates by 10% a year**

A CALL TO ACTION

Queenslanders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent are imprisoned at almost ten times the rate of non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

Project 10% is a call to stop the over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, women and children in Queensland.

The signatories to this call to action are deeply concerned that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders continue to be over-represented in Queensland prisons. Over a quarter (26.4%) of prisoners in Queensland are Aboriginals or Torres Strait Islanders. Successive governments have pledged to redress this inequality but the situation continues to worsen. It is a State disgrace that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are still imprisoned so disproportionately. Solutions have been identified but not delivered; policies written but not carried out; and promises made but not kept.

We call on both the Queensland Government and the Commonwealth Government to redress this inequity by reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rates by 10% a year for the next 10 years.

It is a travesty that our governments should continue to use taxpayers' money for a criminal justice system proven internationally to create social disadvantage, rather than addressing underlying issues of crime and imprisonment. Across urban, rural and remote areas of Queensland, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people receive little cultural recognition, understanding or respect as First Peoples who maintained a well-structured society for over 40 000 years prior to colonisation. Their lives are now controlled by State intervention at a far greater level than most other Queenslanders.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders generally have inequitable access to housing, education, primary health care and infrastructure that other Queenslanders take for granted.

Health issues, including chronic stress, mental illness, alcohol and drug misuse, hearing loss and lack of culturally sensitive services and support, contribute to high imprisonment rates, further marginalising vulnerable people, families and communities.

This is unacceptable. As a State priority, we need to intensify our constructive efforts and reduce the imprisonment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

State and national frameworks are already in place to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rates. By acting upon these, rapid improvements **can** be achieved by Governments working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, service organisations and committed

community members. But they can only be achieved if they are implemented according to the principles that have been shown to work.

Coordinated, targeted and well-resourced action is essential, involving:

- collaborative support from the Queensland and Commonwealth parliaments, aligned with community support
- leadership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in deciding, managing and sustaining solutions that work for their particular situations
- substantively resourced programs and services to support 'at risk' individuals, strengthen families and communities and reduce offending
- changes to discriminatory and unjust laws and practices, and cultural changes in the public service to support these changes
- urgent and sustained inputs at five points of influence (see below).

1. At-risk groups, especially children

2. Police contact

3. Remand and sentencing

4. In-prison programs

5. Post-release support

- Involvement of Elders and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and groups in crime prevention.
- An urgent focus on early childhood development, child safety, maternal health, and support for families and young people.
- Significant and continuing will and action to change the culture of policing towards positive policing that supports and builds social capital.
- Appropriate treatment for people with mental health problems who come into contact with the justice system.
- Provision of diversionary programs to minimise the number of people on remand and in prison, particularly women and young people.
- Sufficient Alcohol and Drug rehabilitation services to support former prisoners post-release.
- Increased support for Elders, Justice Groups, community organisations and individuals who can work with and support people in danger of offending, or who have been imprisoned and are working to reintegrate into society.

We, the undersigned, call on the Premier of Queensland, Prime Minister of Australia, all Parliamentarians and fellow Australians **to join us in our commitment:**

- to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment by 10% a year for 10 years
- by working closely and collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, other experts, organisations, communities and governments
- and by identifying and taking the necessary actions to reach this goal.

Together we can do it.

Chairs: Ken Georgetown, Murri Watch, Nancy Bamaga and Colleen Wall, ATSIWLAS,
Secretariat support provided by ANTaR Qld Association Inc

Please sign, and print your name & email or postal address, then mail or fax to address below.

*By signing you are giving permission for publication of your name as a **Project 10% Call to Action** supporter.*

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