



9 June 2020

Michael Gunner
The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory
PO Box 1
Parap NT 0804

Dear Chief Minister,

We are writing to raise with you the allegations raised by Amnesty International that they have received and investigated numerous reports of children being transported, unrestrained, in these cages for journeys of up to five hours, without cooling or heating. Contrary to Northern Territory Police Force 'Custody and Transport Instruction', which states that children should only be transported in a 'police cage' as a last resort.

Amnesty also claims when raised with your government they were informed that your administration wasn't worried about it. Is this correct? And if so, were you referring to the allegations as having no merit or that you accept their validity but don't believe the practice to be worthy of addressing?

What is your response to the claim by Amnesty International that transporting children in these conditions contravenes Rule 73.2 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners? It may also contravene Article 37(c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which states that 'every child deprived of liberty shall be treated with humanity and respect'. Further that transporting people in motor vehicles without seatbelts is against Australian law.

Indigenous Rights advisor Rodney Dillon stated 'We've been speaking with people in the community for months about kids being driven long distances in these police cages - it's shocking and a totally inappropriate way to treat little kids. In Australia children as young as 10 are locked up in detention and on remand, despite experts from around the world and the United Nations explicitly outlining the harm this causes children and how counterproductive it is as a way to deal with youth offending. 'We should be investing in preventing young people getting trapped in the justice system rather than locking them up,'

The new Northern Territory's police commissioner Jamie Chalker stated "My experience is those communities tend to adopt you if they find that you've treated them fairly [and] you've taken an active interest in the community and community life."

It would seem to us, on the bases of these allegations, the current policing of remote communities is neither fair or taking an active interest in the community and community life, and contrary to best practice in breaking the cycle of criminality in impoverished communities.

Australia Yearly Meeting

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Further research has identified over and punitive policing are hallmarks of structural racism within a society. An accusation often and repeatedly made against NT administration by both domestic and international rights agencies. It is time to tackle and remove structural racism from our society and work to rectify the mistakes of the past rather than entrench them.

We would strongly urge your government reconsider the current practice of transporting children away from their communities and cease the practice immediately of the use of police cages to transport anyone and particularly children given the inherent known health and safety risks involved in such practices.

We await your response.

Regards,



Ann Zubrick
Presiding Clerk
The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

cc: Hon Nicole Manison, Minister for Police

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