

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**AMA SUPPORTS ROYAL COMMISSION INTO NORTHERN
 TERRITORY JUVENILE DETENTION**

The AMA supports the Prime Minister’s decision to establish a Royal Commission into the mistreatment of juveniles in Northern Territory detention, following the shocking revelations in the ABC’s *Four Corners* program last night.

AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, said today that the disturbing images of the inhumane treatment of teenage boys in detention in 21st Century Australia have sent shockwaves through the Australian community.

“The cruelty, violence, and victimisation experienced by these young people will have impacts on their mental and physical health for the rest of their lives,” Dr Gannon said.

“The unacceptable abuse that took place at the Don Dale Detention Centre is clearly indicative of broader problems in the detention and prison systems in the Northern Territory.

“The AMA, at both the Federal and Territory level, has raised concerns over many years based on reports from doctors and other health professionals, including AMA members, about the poor condition and treatment of people in detention in the Territory, especially children - very often Indigenous teenagers.

“There must be a community debate about alternatives to incarceration, and serious investigation into alternative methods of rehabilitation for young offenders. This will require considering new ideas, and brave and creative thinking.

“A Royal Commission will put the spotlight on juvenile justice, and related health issues, and ensure that the inhumane treatment exposed by *Four Corners* never occurs in Australia again.”

Dr Gannon said that the AMA Indigenous Health Report Card 2015 – *Treating the high rates of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a symptom of the health gap: an integrated approach to both* – called on the Australian Government to set a target for closing the gap in the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment.

“Our Report Card showed clearly that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are failed by the health and social justice systems in Australia, and the victims are too often young people and teenagers,” Dr Gannon said.

“Indigenous Australians are 13 times more likely to be imprisoned than their non-Indigenous peers.

“Health issues – notably mental health conditions, alcohol and drug use, substance abuse disorders, cognitive disabilities – are among the most significant drivers of incarceration. We must also look at the intergenerational effects of incarceration,” Dr Gannon said.

The AMA Indigenous Health Report Card 2015 is available at <https://ama.com.au/2015-amareport-card-indigenous-health-closing-gap-indigenous-imprisonment-rates>

26 July 2016

CONTACT: John Flannery

02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761