

# INDIGENOUS LAW BULLETIN

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## Media Release

### **Social Justice Commissioner calls on Government to reduce imprisonment**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Gooda, has called on the Australian Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, to fund justice reinvestment trials in selected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities where there are high levels of imprisonment.

Commissioner Gooda (with co-authors Emilie Priday and Louise McDermott) made the comments in an article published in the latest edition of the *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, titled 'Looking beyond offenders to the needs of victims and communities'.

Justice reinvestment diverts a portion of the funds for imprisonment to local communities where there is a high concentration of offenders. The money that would have been spent on imprisonment is reinvested into services that address the underlying causes of crime in these communities.

"The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the prison system is one of the most entrenched challenges facing Australia," said Commissioner Gooda.

Commissioner Gooda argued that, "Justice reinvestment has a very strong community focus. It recognises that imprisoning or otherwise detaining a large proportion of the population weakens the community, creating the conditions for further crime."

Commenting on the economic merits of justice reinvestment, Commissioner Gooda noted that imprisonment simply does not make good economic sense.

"Imprisonment is an expensive intervention, costing around \$315 a day for an adult. On the other hand, programs to address the underlying causes of offending such as drug and alcohol abuse cost significantly less," said Commissioner Gooda.

"An evidence-based and road-tested approach such as justice reinvestment could be the ultimate win-win," Commissioner Gooda wrote.

"Not only would we be implementing long term sustainable diversion strategies but we would be saving communities' money."

The Australian Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee is currently conducting an Inquiry into the value of a justice reinvestment approach to criminal justice in Australia.

To access a copy of Commissioner Gooda's article click here:

<http://www.ilc.unsw.edu.au/sites/ilc.unsw.edu.au/files/articles/ILB%208%285%29%20Gooda%20et%20al.pdf>

Contact:

Robert McCreery, Editor, [ilb@unsw.edu.au](mailto:ilb@unsw.edu.au), + 61 (2) 9385 2256