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MEDIA RELEASE

Indigenous Doctors deeply concerned about raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12, urge AGs to follow medical advice

The Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) is deeply concerned to hear that a proposal was made at the 12 November Meeting of Attorneys General (MAG) to *"increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 12 including with regard to any carve outs, timing and discussion of implementation supports."*

As the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students, and as an organisation deeply committed to closing the gap, AIDA urges the Attorneys General to listen to expert medical advice and consider raising the age to 14 at the very minimum.

"Raising the age of criminal responsibility is essential in addressing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the legal system," said Dr Simone Raye, Vice-President of AIDA.

"Overwhelming evidence suggests that locking children up does not keep the community safe, but only serves to further entrench children and young people in disadvantage and give them a poor start in life," Dr Raye continued.

"Raising the age from 10 to 12 does nothing to improve the mental and physical wellbeing of these children – many whom would still be in primary school, or just starting high school. Investment should instead be targeted towards giving children the help they need to lead healthy and happy lives in their homes, schools and communities."

AIDA supports the national Raise the Age alliance which calls on state, territory, and Commonwealth governments to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14. AIDA congratulates the ACT Attorney General and the ACT Government for its long-standing commitment to raising the age of criminal responsibility to 14 years - the only state or territory in Australia to do so. AIDA urges governments to heed not only medical and international advice, but the advice of First Nations organisations to reduce the overincarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"If we don't act now, we fear nothing will be done to end the criminalisation of disadvantaged children and young people in Australia. If we are to see meaningful reform in raising the age, we must make sure it is done right, so that we secure the futures of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children."

ENDS

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