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MEDIA RELEASE

Correction: *the previous version of this release stated that Cleveland Dodd died at Banksia Hill detention centre. This was an error. He died at Unit 18 in Casuarina prison in WA. Release updated below.*

Lidia Thorpe says federal action needed, after second Aboriginal child death in WA youth prison.

Senator Lidia Thorpe is calling for urgent federal intervention into the child prison system, after a 17 year old boy died overnight in Banksia Hill youth detention centre in Western Australia.

His death is the second death of a child in Western Australia in less than a year, after 16-year-old Yamatji boy Cleveland Dodd died at Unit 18 in Casuarina prison in October 2023.

The news this morning of the child's death came shortly after news that a 34 year old Indigenous man also died last night in ACT Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Senator Thorpe is calling for urgent federal intervention into the system, saying that federal leadership and a strong federal framework is needed.

She says governments must move to close children's prisons, in favour of evidence-based alternatives focused on care and wellbeing.

Her calls echo those of the National Children's Commissioner, Anne Hollands, who last week [presented a review](#) of the youth justice system in Australia, saying "what I saw and heard is evidence of the most egregious breaches of human rights in this country."

In her report, Commissioner Hollands has called for a national approach to reform, focused on the human rights of children, noting compliance with Australia's human rights obligations is a Federal Government responsibility.

Across the nation, youth detention facilities have come under fire for human rights abuses in recent months, as the NT, QLD and Victorian Labor governments have moved away on previous commitments to reform.

Senator Thorpe says she wrote to the Attorney General's office in February about the human rights violations taking place in child detention facilities across the country, but still has not received a reply.

Quotes attributable to Lidia Thorpe, Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Djab Wurrung independent Victorian Senator:

"My heart goes out to this boy's family and community. He should never have been in that cruel place. I'm standing with you and will fight with you for answers and justice."

"It's outrageous that the Premier in his press conference described this boy's death as 'unfortunate' and said he has 'more confidence than ever before' in this system".

"How can he say that just hours after a young person has died? It's a shocking abrogation of responsibility."

"These deaths are entirely avoidable, and the WA and federal governments are responsible."

"It shows that this Premier, like all governments, refuses to take responsibility for the systems they've built that are killing our children. We're already seeing the victim blaming that we have become so used to."

"Their failure to act over decades has led to this, and will lead to more deaths if serious action isn't taken. We must stop putting children into these brutal prisons. Shut them down."

"Advocates have been calling for the federal government to lead a national approach to justice reform, like they do in other issues like environment and disability, but the government has failed to act."

"This is not about a few bad jurisdictions or a few bad facilities. This is a national crisis. The federal government cannot sit back and watch as more children are horrifically abused and killed in prison."

"I'm furious. I've raised these issues so many times with the Albanese government, and they just shrug their shoulders and say it's up to the states. I raised deaths in custody with the Attorney General and was shouted down by him."

"I am calling on the Prime Minister, the new Indigenous Australians Minister, and the Attorney General to act now. They need to reign in the states who are abusing and killing our children. This is part of the ongoing genocide against our people."

"The federal government needs to work with First Peoples, and the health and community sectors, to create strong federal frameworks that hold the states and territories accountable and stop the abuse. They need to prioritise care, wellbeing and rehabilitation for children."

"The era of prisons, surveillance and policing of children must end. We must imagine a different future for our children, one based in care"

"For decades we've been calling out for change, but just like prison guards ignore the calls of children, government's ignore the calls of grieving mothers and communities to finally take action on deaths in custody."

"It's time for action."