



Australian  
Bar Association

The ABA acknowledges the relationship between the land on which it and its members work and the First Nations' peoples of Australia

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**31 July 2020**

### **AUSTRALIAN BAR ASSOCIATION JOINS EXPRESSION OF DISAPPOINTMENT AT COMMONWEALTH'S JUSTICE TARGETS**

The Australian Bar Association (ABA) joins with national and state legal organisations to express its disappointment at the low justice targets set by the Commonwealth for the reduction in incarceration of First Nations people.

Matt Howard SC, President of the ABA, said today "The ABA backs calls by the Law Council of Australia and the New South Wales Bar Association for a more ambitious justice target for the reduction of First Nations people in custody."

"Reducing the incarceration rate of Indigenous adults by only 15% by 2031 is a profoundly disappointing effort by all Australian governments. Long term structural problems such as the chronic over-incarceration of Indigenous Australians need to be met with long term structural changes.

"First Nations have proposed a number of structural changes to decrease the rate of incarceration, yet government has been unwilling to embrace or implement them.

"There are three well thought out and detailed measures which the ABA encourages the federal and state and territory governments to embrace:

- Implement the Voice to Parliament arising from the Uluru Statement from the Heart
- Raise the age of criminal responsibility from 10 to 14 years of age
- Implement the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission's Pathways to Justice report".

"The minimal target that has been set sends a message that the government lacks ambition in this crucial policy area and reinforces the impression that government is unwilling to tackle the hard issue of over-representation of Indigenous people in the criminal justice system."

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:** Greg Tolhurst: [ceo@austbar.asn.au](mailto:ceo@austbar.asn.au)