



United Nations Human Rights Council, 41st session, 27 June 2019

Item 3 Clustered ID with Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice

Oral statement by the Human Rights Law Centre and Djirra (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Victoria))

Delivered by Antoinette Braybrook

Mr President,

I am an Aboriginal woman. My family is Kuku Yalanji.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the most incarcerated people in the world. We are demanding urgent action from the Australian governments.

Our women are the fastest growing prison population in our country. We are imprisoned at 21 times the rate of other women. We make up 34% of the female prison population but comprise only 2.2% of the Australian female population.

I thank the Working Group on Discrimination Against Women for bringing this devastating statistic to the attention of the Human Rights Council.

Our women are overwhelmingly imprisoned for non-violent offences related to poverty and homelessness. Ninety per cent of our women in prison have experienced family and sexual violence.

Too many of our women are locked behind prison walls un-sentenced and must be freed now.

I call on the Human Rights Council to hold the Australian governments accountable for the discriminatory incarceration of our people.

I urge our governments to move away from tough on crime and law and order approaches.

Our governments must halt building new prisons and expanding them.

They must abolish laws that target our people including the law of public drunkenness in Victoria and Queensland.

The Australian government must support our self-determination and preserve our national programs not abolish them.

The Australian governments must stop locking up our people and taking our mothers away.

Thank you.