

Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA  
Member for Nhulunbuy, NT Legislative Assembly

**25/10/16**

## **Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory**

### **Submission**

*Addressing:*

- *failings in the child protection and youth detention systems of the Government of the Northern Territory;*
- *cultural and management issues that may exist within the Northern Territory youth detention system*

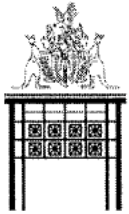
The Hon. Margaret White AO and Mr Mick Gooda,

We Yolngu people are a sovereign people. Every child removed from our society is not being helped or disciplined, they are being stolen and damaged.

When a child is removed from his or her society they are being removed from those responsible for their care, and therefore placed into danger. No amount of money or new facilities can replace that. Children being imprisoned by the NT government are being taken into places without understanding of who they are and where they come from in life. An institution fulfilling duty of care within these circumstances is not possible.

Our people have always maintained our own justice, rehabilitative and education needs. Children have grown up strong and focused. That was until others came in and started to stop parents and grandparents, aunties and uncles from disciplining their own. My people's institutions, including Ngarra and Gunupipi are still able to discipline and educate the young. Our Dhuni forums are still able to most effectively deal with judgements of wrong doing, restitution and rehabilitation.

Over the last 5 years we have had the East Arnhem Mediation and Restorative Conferencing (EAM) project in our region. It has supported the role of our own institutions and authorities in resolution of disputes, restitution and rehabilitation. This project already provides a prototype for immediate limited return of justice needs to our community, but more importantly, with adjustments in enforcement powers, the project provides a middle term solution to re-empowerment of our justice system.



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Improved facilities or training of staff alone will not help this situation. Change will only happen for our children when our right to self- determine is prioritised and the role of maintaining Magaya – peace, justice, harmony and good governance- is fully returned to our society.

We need our power back. We are worried about what type of people our children will be. If we cannot be the ones to provide our children's needs, showing them how to grow up and be responsible Yolngu citizens, then how will they turn out?

Sincerely

Yingiya Mark Guyula MLA



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