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Media Release

Women's advocacy group calls to include women and girls in the royal commission into Northern Territory juvenile detention

Seeds of Affinity, a women's advocacy group assisting criminalised women to integrate back into society, understands that the shocking mistreatment of youth in detention aired on the ABC Four Corners program at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre is prevalent across the Australian prison system.

While the call for a royal commission into the treatment of Aboriginal youth in detention in the Northern Territory is welcomed, the group says the enquiry must address the underlying culture of the justice system.

Chairperson Linda Fisk, who has experienced prison herself says, 'We know this violence is going on in prisons all over this country.'

The organisation recognises that women prisoners are particularly disadvantaged, with more than 60% being imprisoned after committing a first offence (compared with 2% of men) and many experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder or sexual and domestic violence.

'Funding for mental health facilities has been cut so the states default position for the marginalised is the prison industrial complex,' says Ms Fisk.

Seeds of Affinity work closely with the Department of Corrections to help reduce social isolation and break down the stigma faced by criminalised women and their families.

The group held a forum earlier in the year with a panel of government officials, lawyers, criminalised women and advocates to address the issues affecting women in prison and the bond with their children.

The forum highlighted the need for work culture and attitudes of those working in the prison system to change.

'The system's culture of violence must be exposed,' says Ms Fisk.

'This royal commission must extend to include women and girls because the government is the biggest effecter of change.'

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