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Federal Government must help fund Royal Commission outcomes

Having established a Royal Commission which uncovered the depth of the mistreatment and abuse of young people in the Northern Territory's youth detention system, the Federal Government must now adequately fund the final report's recommendations, says Jesuit Social Services.

"The landmark final report and recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory provides an opportunity for the Territory to create meaningful youth justice reform to ultimately create better outcomes for young people, families and the broader community," says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

Yesterday, the Federal Government published a response to 28 of the final report's 226 recommendations. While the response provided in principle support for several key recommendations, it contained no commitment of Commonwealth funding to implement any of these recommendations.

"Serious issues have emerged within youth detention facilities across the country. The Royal Commission recommendations offer a positive way forward, and a chance for the Territory to shift from punitive responses to vulnerable young people to approaches based on prevention, diversion and rehabilitation," says Ms Edwards.

Jesuit Social Services' General Manager in the NT, Jared Sharp, says the organisation welcomes the Federal Government's in principle support of recommendations including place-based approaches to implementing reform, but says this support must be matched with clear and specific timeframes for implementation.

"The Northern Territory Government cannot fund reform on its own. It is imperative that the Federal Government, having established this Royal Commission in response to the horrors of the Don Dale detention facility being exposed, matches the Northern Territory Government's funding commitments to ensure recommendations are fully realised and implemented," says Mr Sharp.

In November, following the handing down of the final report, the Northern Territory Government committed \$50 million to closing down the Don Dale facility. Mr Sharp would like to see the Federal Government match this amount to ensure that Don Dale can be replaced by a model based on effective approaches.

"Last year, leaders from Jesuit Social Services explored youth detention models across Europe and parts of the US. We found jurisdictions that invested in small, home-like facilities with an emphasis on education were highly effective at preventing re-offending," he says.

"The Federal Government must ensure the NT Government is supported to reform the way it responds to young people involved with the youth justice system".

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