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Further incident at Don Dale highlights NT Government's longstanding failure to replace unsuitable facility

The Gunner Government must urgently replace the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre with a purpose-built facility for children following reports of yet another incident at the centre, the Law Council of Australia and the Law Society NT said today.

President of the Law Council, Arthur Moses SC, said while the cause of the recent disturbance is not yet clear, what is clear is that Don Dale, a former adult prison, is not fit for the detention of children.

"What we do know is that children simply should not be detained at Don Dale. It is a former adult prison that was not deemed suitable for adult detainees yet we have placed the most vulnerable members of our community - our children - in the facility," Mr Moses said.

"The NT Government has known this for the best part of 18 months but has failed to act to remove the children from this facility."

President of the Law Society NT, Maria Savvas, said, "The NT Government's longstanding failure to replace Don Dale with a purpose-built facility for children is a matter of serious concern. This situation cannot be allowed to continue."

In November 2017 the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory recommended Don Dale be closed and replaced with a purpose-built centre for children.

The NT Government promised to implement all of the Royal Commission's recommendations, yet to date Don Dale remains open.

"The NT Government has moved at a glacial pace on this critical issue. In the meantime, children have been moved into an adult prison that is not fit to hold adults, let alone minors who are amongst the most vulnerable in our community," Ms Savvas said.

In March the Law Council and the Law Society NT called on the Gunner Government to honour its commitment to replace the centre as a matter of urgency.

"Riots at Don Dale in November 2018 highlighted issues relating to not enough staff being employed. Reports of a further disturbance at the facility over the long weekend underscore the urgent need for the NT Government to act swiftly to remove children from this facility," Ms Savvas said.

"The calls for this to occur cannot continue to be ignored. If the NT Government cannot deliver on its promise to act on the Royal Commission's recommendations in a timely manner, it is time that the Commonwealth Government intervened as it has the constitutional right and a moral duty to do so," Mr Moses said.

"Children must not remain in an unsuitable facility that may impact upon their wellbeing. Communities are judged on how they treat their children and their most vulnerable. Children are paying the price for the Government's lack of swift action. We cannot look the other way as a community and allow this to continue."

Anil Lambert

P 0416 426 722 E Anil@hortonadvisory.com.au