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media release

NEW SOUTH WALES ABORIGINAL LAND COUNCIL

NSWALC Councillor Condemns Rising Incarceration Rate

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Steve Gordon, the elected Councillor for the New South Wales Aboriginal Land Council's North West Region has condemned Australian governments and their agencies for shirking their responsibilities in regard to the implementation of the now more than 23 year old Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC).

Councillor Gordon was commenting on the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee Inquiry into Aboriginal incarceration rates.

Councillor Gordon said the grim situation is that for Aboriginal men, the rate of imprisonment increased by 27 per cent in the years between 2000 and 2008, and for women, by more than 40 per cent. Aboriginal adults are now 13 times more likely than non-indigenous adults to be sent to goal, and they're much more likely to re-offend.

Councillor Gordon said, "This is simply unacceptable.

"Australia has one of the highest incarceration rates of Aboriginal people in the OECD and the figures keep on rising.

"That although millions of dollars have been spent trying to implement the recommendations not only has the proportion increased but the number of prisoners has grown.

"In 1992-3 the level of over representation for the nation as a whole was 14.9 now it's up as high as 28 percent of the prison population.

"More money needs to be directed at preventative programs rather than building more prisons.

"We have to seriously reconsider an overhaul of the way the recommendations are being implemented".

The overview of the RCIADIC found "That the most significant factor contributing to the over- representation of Aboriginal people in custody is their disadvantaged and unequal position in Australian society socially, economically and culturally.

Councillor Gordon said until Governments get serious about “Closing the Gap” the incarceration rate of Indigenous adults will increase even more rapidly.

“To be blind to the potential consequences of this growth may be deemed criminal” said Councillor Gordon.

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