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Press Release

The refusal of Attorney-General George Brandis to expand the Northern Territory youth detention Royal Commission to include Tasmania and other jurisdictions has been slammed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. Chief Executive Officer Heather Sculthorpe said, “Since George Brandis defunded the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service, there has been little scrutiny of how our youth are treated at Ashley Detention Centre. That implicates the Attorney General in the decision making processes that have left our children vulnerable. He should therefore be removed from the decisions about what the Royal Commission will examine and leave it to the Prime Minister to negotiate the terms of reference for the Commission. It is decisions like those made by George Brandis and Nigel Scullion that need the Royal Commission’s scrutiny. Alternative programs operated by the Aboriginal community should have been funded to avoid the need for detention facilities like Don Dale and Ashley.”

Ms Sculthorpe said the Royal Commission should also examine the processes used by Tasmanian authorities when making funding decisions about Aboriginal programs, “Our complaint about young Tasmanian Aborigines being sent to residential programs in the Northern Territory was met by a public servant claiming our organisation was invited to apply for funds to run a similar program but we declined to do so. That is factually incorrect. The State Government removed funding from our alternative to detention program: it was their decision, not ours. It is impossible for public scrutiny and transparency to apply when public officials feel free to mislead the public in the ways shown here as well as in the 4 Corners Program.”

Heather Sculthorpe
Chief Executive
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