



AUSTRALIAN  
CHILD RIGHTS  
TASKFORCE

7 November 2025

Mr Michal Balcerzak  
Chair, Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination United Nations

Dear Committee Chair,

### **Youth Justice in Australia – Complaint**

The Australian Child Rights Taskforce is a coalition of over one hundred organisations, networks and individuals committed to the protection of the rights of children and young people in Australia. Our key objective is to report on and support measures to address child rights issues in Australia. This includes reporting to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and supporting reporting to other human rights bodies. We have also made and supported recommendations to the Australian Government for many years to improve national action on child safety and youth justice.

The Taskforce has called for enforceable national minimum standards to drive reform in youth justice systems. We have noted the disproportionate impacts of the flaws of existing systems upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We have given evidence alongside the Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates Group at the Australian Senate's Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System earlier this year.

We write to you in relation to the complaint submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under the early warning and urgent action procedure, regarding the disproportionate impact of youth justice laws and policies in Australia upon Indigenous / Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. **The complaint was lodged in March 2025 by the Human Rights Law Centre and Professor Megan Davis and Associate Professor Hannah McGlade.**

The Taskforce supports the complaint. We note the ongoing attention that has been given to the discriminatory operation of our youth justice systems by the Committee and other UN human rights bodies including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Special Rapporteurs on Torture and on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The Australian Government has failed to act decisively with leadership and the legislative and policy actions of several State and Territory Governments have further worsened the situation.

We encourage the Committee to issue a decision as soon as possible during its upcoming session this year. We contend that Australia is in serious breach of the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and urge the Committee to call on the Australian Government to take immediate action to address this breach and prevent further harm.

Yours faithfully,

James McDougall – Co-Chair