

Selena Uibo

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



Media Release

## The Territory's Historic Aboriginal Justice Agreement Launched

9 August 2021

The Territory Labor Government and Aboriginal and community sector leaders have today signed a ground-breaking Agreement to deliver a safer community and better justice outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.

The Aboriginal Justice Agreement (AJA) is the first of its kind in the Territory.

The AJA seeks to create a safer Territory by reducing crime and address the Territory's high rates of Indigenous incarceration and reoffending.

The seven-year agreement has three key aims covering services, leadership and systems:

- Reduce reoffending and imprisonment rates of Aboriginal Territorians to reduce crime;
- Engage and support Aboriginal leadership; and
- Improve justice responses and services for Aboriginal Territorians

Actions from the Agreement are strongly focused on community-level initiatives including supporting and establishing local law and justice groups, re-introducing community courts, continuing alternatives to custody and redesigning and expanding access to programs that address the root causes of offending.

The Territory Labor Government has invested \$4.52 million to implement actions in the first year of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement.

As part of the AJA, the Government will continue to work on sentencing reform to build a simpler and more effective approach for a safer Territory.

These reforms will ensure there are more sentencing options that are better targeted to appropriately address offending behaviour and prevent reoffending.

The AJA has been developed in partnership between Government, Aboriginal Organisations and NGOs.

Over three years, more than 160 community consultations were undertaken to deliver the AJA.

The AJA will also be launched in Alice Springs and Kalkarindji later this month.

All individuals and organisations are now able to sign up to the AJA.

To find out more and to read the AJA, and its Action and Implementation Plans, please visit: [www.nt.gov.au/aja](http://www.nt.gov.au/aja)

**Quotes from Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Selena Uiibo:**

"The signing of this Agreement is a momentous step towards improving the lives of Aboriginal Territorians, and the safety of all Territorians, so together we can make the Territory a better place for everyone.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that all Territorians have the ability to grow, thrive and live safely.

"We know that if we keep doing the same things, we will keep getting the same results – and that is why we are delivering new initiatives based on what Aboriginal communities tell us will work, to create better outcomes.

"Together we can ensure Aboriginal Territorians who are in contact with the justice system are treated fairly, respectfully, and without discrimination. Together we can ensure that decisions are led by Aboriginal people to make the changes needed across our communities."

**Quotes from AJA Reference Group Co-Chair and North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) Principal Legal Officer David Woodroffe:**

"Today's launch of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement represents a welcome evidence-based approach to improve justice outcomes for Aboriginal Territorians.

"This is about transforming the justice landscape for Aboriginal people, it is about investing in therapeutic programs that will change lives, and it is about reducing incarceration and recidivism rates."

**Quotes from AJA Reference Group Co-Chair and Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS) Chief Executive Officer Deborah Di Natale:**

"The Aboriginal Justice Agreement is the culmination of three years of work, more than 160 community consultations, and input from many NGOs that have worked in this space for decades.

"This document holds the wisdom of 120 communities and we know that communities have the solutions. I look forward to seeing this agreement work as a partnership between the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal people."