

Kyam Maher MLC
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Joe Szakacs MP
Minister for Police

Friday 30 September 2022

Leading figures to tackle Aboriginal incarceration

Leading figures from Aboriginal communities and experts in the field of criminal justice will look at how the incarceration rates of Aboriginal people in South Australia can be reduced.

The eight-person Advisory Commission, which includes local, interstate and international representatives, has been tasked with providing advice to Government for consideration early next year, and will consist of:

- Chris Larkin
- Heather Agius
- Jonathan Rudin
- Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt AO
- Leanne Liddle
- Major Sumner AM
- Adjunct Associate Professor Scott Wilson
- Professor Tracey McIntosh

The Commission will consider the key issues of drivers of reoffending, interactions of Aboriginal people with the criminal justice system, options to reduce overrepresentation of Aboriginal people on remand and culturally appropriate and culturally responsive custody options.

Key representatives from relevant Government departments will be made available to the Commission to provide any additional information they need in considering their recommendations.

Quotes attributable to Kyam Maher MLC:

While Aboriginal people constitute about 2.4 per cent of our population, they account for nearly a quarter of the adult prison population, and half of all young people in detention. This is unacceptable and clearly needs to change.

This Commission brings together some of the finest minds the world has to offer to look at a long-standing and, sadly, globally common problem. This is something that all states and territories are grappling with, and closely aligns with broader initiatives under Closing the Gap.

Importantly, half of the Commission members are South Australian Aboriginal leaders with expertise and knowledge in the criminal justice system.

We also have world-renowned leaders in their fields – people like Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt, a Professor of Law who has written numerous textbooks on Indigenous legal issues; sociology and criminology expert Professor Tracey McIntosh, Professor of Indigenous Studies at the University of Auckland; and Jonathan Rudin, Aboriginal Justice expert, and Constitutional Litigator in Residence at Toronto’s David Asper Centre for Constitutional Rights.

I’m pleased that such a great wealth of knowledge and experience will be able to consider these issues, look at the approaches taken in other jurisdictions and consider what may work in a South Australian context.

This is part of our commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people, alongside our commitment to Voice, Treaty and Truth.

Quotes attributable to Joe Szakacs MP:

The work of this Commission will form an important step forward in tackling the over-representation of Aboriginal people in South Australia’s criminal justice system.

I look forward to learning of the Commission’s findings when their insights are presented to Government early next year.

Advisory Commission into Aboriginal Incarceration Rates

Member biographies

Chris Larkin

Mr Chris Larkin is a Kokatha man and a traditional owner of 140,000sq km of land in SA's north, stretching north from Port Augusta and from Lake Torrens in the east to the Gawler Ranges in the west. The Kokatha people were recognised as native title holders in 2014.

Mr Larkin is the CEO of Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Inc.

Mr Larkin has held various positions on the board of the Kokatha Aboriginal Corporation (KAC), including chair and deputy chair. Mr Larkin was a former Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Division in the Department for Families and Communities.



Heather Agius

Mrs Heather Agius, an Aboriginal Elder, was SA Female Elder of the Year in 2017. Mrs Agius is also founder of Grannies Group, a network of Aboriginal grandparents who advocate on behalf of issues affecting their children, grandchildren and their community. Mrs Agius is a SA Patron of the Justice Reform Initiative.

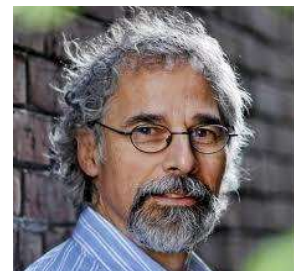
Mrs Agius is actively involved in assisting Aboriginal people navigate the criminal justice system. For the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM), Mrs Agius is a Visiting Inspector of prison an Elder in the Magistrates Drug Court and sits on the independent committee, Family Matters, for children who are removed from their families.



Jonathan Rudin

Jonathan Rudin is the program director at Aboriginal Legal Services in Canada. He is the author of 'Indigenous People and the Criminal Justice System: A Practitioner's Handbook'. Mr Rudin has written widely and spoken passionately on the topic of Aboriginal justice and has advocated countless cases before all-levels of Canadian courts.

Rudin's book, published by Emond in 2018, won the Walter Owen Book Prize from the Canadian Foundation for Legal Research.



OFFICIAL

Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt OA

Distinguished Professor Larissa Behrendt OA is a Eualeyai/Kamillaroi woman. She is a Distinguished Professor and the Director of Research at the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning at the University of Technology Sydney. She has a LLB and B. Juris from the University of New South Wales and a LLM and SJD from Harvard Law School.

In 2021, Professor Behrendt received the Australian Human Rights Commission Human Rights Medal, and in 2020 she received an Order of Australia for distinguished service to Indigenous education and research, to the law, and to the visual and performing arts. In 2009 she was NAIDOC Person of the Year award and 2011 New South Wales Australian of the Year.

Professor Behrendt has a legal background with a strong track record in the areas of Indigenous law, policy, creative arts, education and research. She has held numerous judicial positions and sat on various community and arts organisation boards. Larissa is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences of Australia and a Foundation Fellow of the Australian Academy of Law.

**Leanne Liddle**

Leanne Liddle is a Central Arrernte woman and Director of the Northern Territory Government's Aboriginal Justice Unit. She was South Australia's first female Aboriginal police officer and is well-known for her role in the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement. Ms Liddle was the NT Australian of the Year for 2022.

After leaving the police force, Ms Liddle went on to attain a law degree and spent some time working for the UN in several high-profile roles in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. In her role as Director for the Aboriginal Justice Unit, she met and listened to Aboriginal elders and communities across the Northern Territory in order to deliver the Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement.



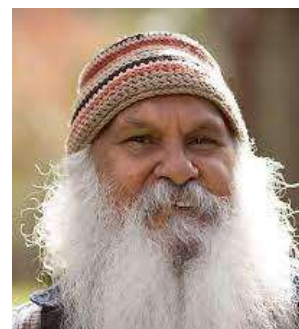
Ms Liddle has over 30 years' experience in the public service where she has worked in many remote areas across South Australia and the Northern Territory. Over this time, she has worked in the co-management of National Parks in SA, food security and more recently in policy, governance, and social justice. Leanne has been involved in numerous legislative reviews across South Australia.

OFFICIAL

Major 'Moogy' Sumner AM

Major Lancelot Sumner AM (Uncle Moogy) is a senior elder of the Ngarrindjeri people of the Coorong in South Australia. He was appointed a Merit of the Order of Australia in 2014 for his significant service to Indigenous communities in South Australia. He is also Director of Talkingjeri Aboriginal Corporation and sits on the International Indigenous Repatriation Committee. Uncle Moogy was the driving force behind Ringbalin, an annual ceremony held since 2010 that dances the spirit back into the Murray River.

The Sumner family lived in Canada for a while to learn more about incorporating Indigenous justice and law into modern law systems.

**Scott Wilson**

Scott Wilson is Chief Executive Officer of Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (SA) Inc, and has been since 1995. Mr Wilson is an Adjunct Associate Professor at Sydney Medical School, and is the Convenor of the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON).

Mr Wilson has held a number of other leadership roles including Chair of the National Indigenous Substance Misuse Council Inc, Deputy Chair of the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee, the Alcohol Education Rehabilitation Fund, and the National Drug Strategy Reference Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Executive Member of the Australian National Council on Drugs, and Executive Director of the Alcohol and Other Drugs Council of Australia.

**Professor Tracey McIntosh**

Professor Tracey McIntosh is Ngāi Tūhoe and a Professor of Indigenous Studies and Co-Head of the School of Māori Studies and Pacific Studies at the University of Auckland. She is also a Commissioner of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

In 2012 Professor McIntosh served as the co-chair of the Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty. In 2018-2019 she was a member of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group which released the report 'Whakmana Tangata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand' (2019). Professor McIntosh was also a member of the Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group which released the report 'He Waka Roimata: Transforming our Criminal Justice System' (2019) and 'Turuki! Turuki!' (2019).

Professor McIntosh currently delivers education and creative writing programmes in prisons. Her recent research focuses on incarceration (particularly of Māori and Indigenous peoples) and issues pertaining to poverty, inequality and social justice.

