

Statement on video depicting excessive force by police towards Aboriginal woman

We the undersigned organisations are deeply concerned by the treatment of an Aboriginal woman by the Queensland Police Service in video footage which emerged over the weekend. The video appears to show a male officer responding with excessive physical force towards an Aboriginal woman, including repeatedly shoving her as she attempted to get closer to her teenage son. There also appears to be conflicting reports as to the basis for the police entering the home and what they were responding to.

Effective policing relies on having the trust of the community. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, well-documented contemporary and historical factors including racism and deaths in custody have contributed to low levels of trust in the police. This negative relationship hinders the ability to build positive relationships between the community and police, and also impedes the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access their rights under the law.

Incidents such as this perpetuate mistrust in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities towards the police. Sadly, too often communities report this kind of police treatment. These incidents may influence the willingness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors to report family violence to the police in the future.

The undersigned organisations are seeking:

- an independent investigation as to why such force was used towards an Aboriginal mother and on what basis the police were in the home;
- an assurance that policies and practices are put in place to ensure police do not use excessive force, particularly force which adds to the unacceptable levels of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; and
- the development and implementation of strategies which are aimed at building stronger collaborative relationships between police and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and their representative bodies. These strategies should improve police interaction with the community and build the capacity of police to respond to family violence, mental health issues and other complex situations, in a culturally safe way.

This open letter is supported by the following organisations:

Amnesty International

ANTaR

Australian Council of Social Service

First Peoples Disability Network Australia

Human Rights Law Centre

Menzies School of Health Research

National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

National Association of Community Legal Centres

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum

Oxfam Australia

Queensland Association of Independent Legal Service Inc

Save the Children

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care

Sisters Inside

Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

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