



## JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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### NT WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICES EXPRESS GRAVE CONCERN OVER TRANSFER OF WOMEN BETWEEN CORRECTIONAL CENTRES

Women's Legal Services in the Northern Territory are gravely concerned about the recent movement of incarcerated women from the Alice Springs Correctional Centre to the Darwin Correctional Centre.

Whilst these women are serving sentences or are on remand, they still have a right to be connected to their children, their culture, their community, and their country: needs so basic and critical that they are recognised in multiple international human rights instruments.

We know that these are predominantly Central Desert women, and that most will be survivors of domestic and family violence. Some are likely serving periods of imprisonment for no other reason than being mis-identified as the primary perpetrator of violence.

We are concerned that it is women who are bearing the burden of a system in crisis, and that women will suffer additional and needless trauma as a result.

Transferring women to a Correctional Centre 1,500km (or more) from their nearest regional centre has severe consequences. To name only a few:

- Face to face access with their children and families becomes almost impossible due to distance and financial cost;
- Access to the service sector (legal and other support services) who are working with these women to support their transition back to community is disrupted; and
- Custodial and other programs essential to addressing recidivism are interrupted, delayed, or cannot be delivered at all.

We understand the need for Northern Territory prisons to be safe environments for staff and inmates. We recognise that both Correctional Centres have experienced capacity concerns throughout 2024, and that this challenge needs to be appropriately managed.

However, disconnecting these women from their country, families and support networks will have a disproportionate impact on their wellbeing. Relocating this cohort of women fails to meet the rehabilitative aims of incarceration, as well as fundamental human rights standards.

**We urge the Department of Corrections to take two (2) steps of urgent action:**

- 1. Make a plan to return these women to Alice Springs as a matter of absolute priority.**
- 2. As an immediate action, take proactive steps to discuss with every woman affected their individual circumstances and how the adverse impact of this transfer can best be alleviated.**

More broadly, we urge the Northern Territory Government to:

- Expedite the commitment to implementing women's specific prisons in the Northern Territory.
- Consider appropriate mechanisms to increase the availability of non-custodial options, particularly during times of custodial population pressure.

Our hearts are with these women, and their families, during what must be an incredibly distressing time.

- ENDS -

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