

Intervention on Deprivation of Liberty, To be delivered on Wednesday 26 June

at Plenary Session ITEM 3: WG on discrimination against women 12pm-3pm

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner,

Australian Human Rights Commission

I am Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. I am making this statement on behalf of the Australian Human Rights Commission, Australia's 'A status' NHRI.'

I begin by thanking the Australian Government for supporting my Wiyi Yani U Thangani project which is enabling Indigenous women and girls to have their voices heard at the national level for the first time in 33 years.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women represent 2% of Australia's female population but make up 34% of all women in prison.

The root cause of this over-representation is that Indigenous women continue to experience disproportionate levels of trauma and intersecting forms of discrimination which cut across lines of race, gender and socio-economic status.

Over-incarceration further perpetuates the inequalities experienced by our families and communities. There is a direct connection between the fact that 80% of Indigenous women in prison are mothers, and the rapidly increasing rates of the removal of Indigenous children from families into out-of-home care.

We must invest in prevention through provision of wrap-around supports to our families, and we must ensure that real alternatives to incarceration become viable options, as was recommended by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples following her visit to Australia in 2017.

I call on the Australian Government to fully implement the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission's Report: Pathway's to Justice, and to heed the recommendations that I will make in my Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report later this year.

Thank you.