



Media Release

March 25, 2024

KYC condemns the decision made by the Victorian Labor Government to implement an electronic monitoring trial, disregarding tireless advocacy of Aboriginal Community and experts in the field.

The Koorie Youth Council (KYC) is deeply concerned about the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people following the Victorian Labor Government's announcement to trial electronic monitoring.

Last week, Attorney-General Jaclyn Symes announced that the Labor Government would develop a trial of electronic monitoring of children and young people as part of their bail conditions. KYC condemns this decision to abandon crucial bail reforms, as well as a report from the Yoorrook Justice Commission, that would reduce the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in favour of a surveillance project is a serious disregard for the welfare of children and young people across Victoria. The trial will subject our children to harsh conditions at a time when they need help and connection to culture and community. Exposing our children to this trial will create further harm and disconnection and create damaging visibility of physically being subject electronic monitoring.

KYC calls for the government to drop surveillance tactics and instead invest in Aboriginal community-driven programs that have shown positive impacts within our communities and our children and young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people deserve to live rich, happy, and fulfilling lives where their safety and well-being are cared for and respected. Implementing systems that over-police will likely drive our children to reoffend. Time and time again, we see that electronic monitoring does not work for any community or demographic, especially Aboriginal communities.

Bonnie Dukakis, Executive Officer of KYC, states, *"To allow our children and young people to be subjected to ankle monitoring bracelets to alleviate the fear of community, places the onus on our children rather than services and systems that have continuously let down the needs of our children. This is not about community safety but further criminalising our children and subjecting them to treatment that is stigmatising and dehumanising. It is setting them up to fail and making it more likely that they will be trapped in the legal system for life."*

KYC stands with the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service (VALS), which has been working for five years with the government, consulting on the Bail Amendment Bill and the upcoming Youth Justice Bill. When children and young people were left out of the Bail Amendment Bill late last year, we were promised they would be included through the Youth Justice Bill. KYC strongly supports VALS' recommendations regarding bail reforms, which have not been implemented by the Victorian Government which we know will have further harm on our children.

In 2018, KYC released Ngaga-dji: hear me, a report that sets out a vision for a Victoria that enables Aboriginal children to thrive and the path to making it happen. One of the key recommendations in Ngaga-dji is to support, strengthen, and resource Aboriginal community organisations that have existing embedded self-determined youth support systems with localised services across health, social and emotional wellbeing, education, family, legal, cultural, and drug and alcohol services. This report recommends expanding the Balit Ngulu to state-wide availability. Tangible positive outcomes for our young people centre community care and self-determination, cultural safety and support.

“We need more self-determined responses. Our children and young people know what they need, and our communities can provide the support and care they need if the government invests in our people instead of investing in more policing of our children.”

Read Ngaga-dji here: www.ngaga-djiproject.org.au

Koorie Youth Council (KYC)

KYC is the representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Victoria. Guided by an Executive of 15 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, KYC values the diversity and strength of young people as decision-makers. KYC advocates to government and community to advance the rights and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. By hosting events like the annual Koorie Youth Summit, KYC brings Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people together to amplify their voices for social change.

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