



Sharon Grierson MP
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CLEAR DIRECTIONS FOR INDIGENOUS LAW & JUSTICE

The tabling of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts & Audit's report, *Access of Indigenous Australians to Law & Justice Services*, gives the Government clear directions for the future, Deputy Committee Chair Sharon Grierson says.

"The report strongly recommends the acceptance of separate and specific requirements for the three main areas of legal services - family, civil and criminal law - matched by adequate funding."

"Ways to respond to the problem of staff recruitment and retention in legal services were also identified - including comparable pay rates, exchange programs, bonded rural scholarships, and assisted training and development positions for paralegal community support workers. The better coordination of legal services and resource sharing were also considered vital."

"There is a tendency for legal representation services to be directed primarily at those facing criminal charges. However, in the interests of women and children, the family violence prevention services - so needed in both urban and rural Indigenous communities - must also be consistently accessible and available for direct legal representation."

"It was a privilege for the Committee to be invited by the people of Yuendumu, near Alice Springs, to visit their community. This visit reinforced the effectiveness of community-determined initiatives to overcome petrol sniffing, domestic violence and antisocial behaviour. It also demonstrated the effective integration of both indigenous law and mainstream law."

"There is no place in our society for programs of paternal benevolence such as the Government's recently announced "petrol for parenting" measures."

"But there is a real need for taking notice of Indigenous communities when they pose local solutions to the problems eating away at their communities."

"I look forward to a timely response from the Government to the Committee's recommendations."

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