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Media release

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Human rights lawyers call for independent inquiry into death of 29-year-old Indigenous man being held on remand in South Australia

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (ALHR) has spoken out in support of statements made by the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement following news of the tragic death on Monday morning.

Dr Amy Maguire, Co-Chair of ALHR's Indigenous Rights subcommittee said, "ALHR is deeply saddened to hear of the death of a 29-year-old Indigenous inmate following an alleged altercation involving prison guards at Yatala Labor Prison. Our very deepest sympathies go out to Mr Morrison's family and loved ones."

"ALHR strongly supports calls made by the Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement for an independent inquiry overseen by a public body such as the Office for Public Integrity."

"There appear to be questions about the time it took for the inmate to receive medical attention as well as the time it took to notify his family members of the events surrounding his injuries. An independent inquiry is needed to shed light on all of the events that took place following the deceased being taken into custody on remand."

"ALHR notes that the inmate was being held on remand and had never been in prison previously. His family has said that Mr Morrison was preparing to apply for home detention bail to live with his mother in preparation for trial."

"25 years on from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Australian jurisdictions appear to have gone backwards. When the Royal Commission report was released in 1991, 14% of prison inmates were Indigenous – today, the percentage of Indigenous inmates is 27%. In 1991-1992, there were nine Indigenous deaths in custody. In all but one of the 25 years since, there have been at least that many deaths or more."

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ALHR was established in 1993 and is a national network of solicitors, barristers, academics, judicial officers and law students who practice and promote international human rights law in Australia. ALHR has active and engaged National, State and Territory committees and a secretariat at La Trobe University Law School in Melbourne. Through advocacy, media engagement, education, networking, research and training, ALHR promotes, practices and protects universally accepted standards of human rights throughout Australia and overseas.