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## Media release

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### **Conduct of Coronial Inquiries into Deaths in Custody Must Change: ALHR, Watch Committee**

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights (**ALHR**) strongly supports recommendations submitted by the First Nations Deaths in Custody Watch Committee of Western Australia (**Watch Committee**) to the 2016 Asia Pacific Coroners' Society Conference on Friday.

David Woodrofe, Co-Chair of ALHR's Indigenous Rights Subcommittee said, "The Watch Committee has called on State and Territory governments to take the long overdue step of implementing recommendations made 25 years ago by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody concerning the conduct of coronial inquiries.

"Coronial investigations of Indigenous deaths in custody must be undertaken in a culturally-appropriate manner. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advocates are best placed to support families in their loss and to assist in informing presiding Coroners on cultural issues and practices."

ALHR WA Convenor, Verity Long-Droppert, said, "these recommendations represent important steps forward for West Australian coronial inquests into Indigenous deaths in custody. The Watch Committee takes a lead role in strengthening and defending the human rights of Indigenous prisoners and their families in Western Australia, and these recommendations should not be taken lightly.

"We urge State Coroner, Ros Fogliani, to implement the recommendations of the Watch Committee, and ensure the process of coronial inquest is culturally appropriate, timely and achieves its purpose without compounding the tragedy of a death in custody."

**To arrange an interview with David Woodrofe, Co-Chair of the ALHR Indigenous Rights Subcommittee or Verity Long-Droppert, ALHR WA Convenor please contact Matt Mitchell on 0431 980 365 or [media@alhr.org.au](mailto:media@alhr.org.au).**

For more information on ALHR please visit <http://www.alhr.org.au>

MORE

**WATCH COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

ALHR strongly supports the Watch Committee's calls for the implementation of Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations 8, 15, 16, 18 - 26, 35 - 28 and that all be legislated into the Coroners Act of each State/Territory (in cases where they have not already been legislated);

These recommendations relate to the conduct of coronial inquiries into deaths in custody and include:

- timelines for ministerial responses and the provision of information to parties at coronial inquests
- the development, by coroners, of state and territory protocols for the conduct of inquiries into deaths in custody
- rights of relatives and deceased's representative to view body, have independent observer present at post-mortem and obtain own independent post-mortem
- post-mortem should be conducted by specialist forensic pathologist
- awareness and respect of cultural issues that may relate to autopsy and engagement with relatives and organisations such as Aboriginal Legal Services to address these
- custodial authorities be required by law to immediately notify the Coroners Office of all deaths in custody

More information on the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody can be found [here](#).

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