

COMMUNITY IS EVERYTHING

AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL

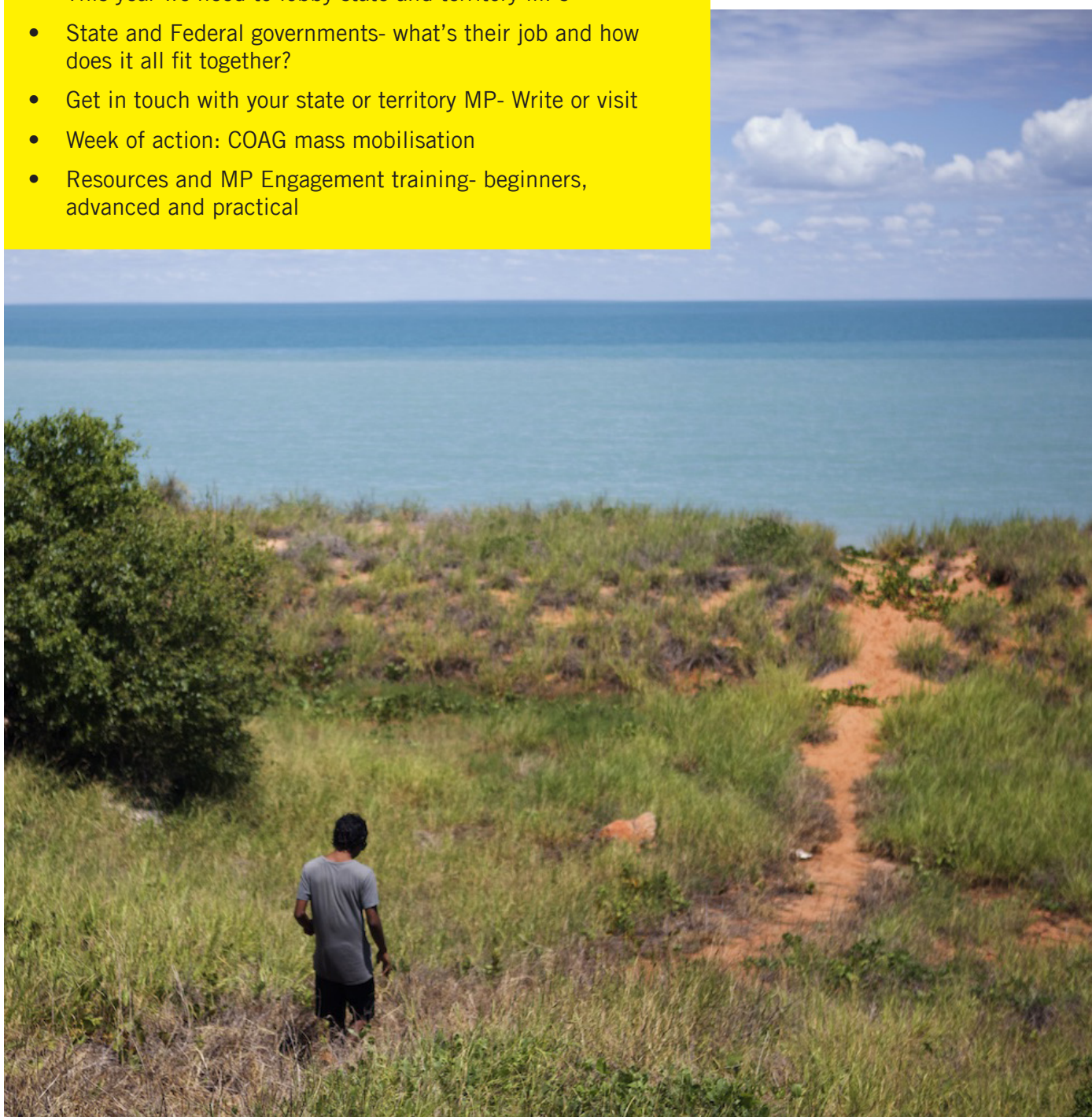


What's in this toolkit?

- We've already achieved a lot!
- Give me the details! The campaign objectives in full
- How do I fit?
- The overall political plan
- This year we need to lobby state and territory MPs
- State and Federal governments- what's their job and how does it all fit together?
- Get in touch with your state or territory MP- Write or visit
- Week of action: COAG mass mobilisation
- Resources and MP Engagement training- beginners, advanced and practical

Toolkit #2

8 July 2015



WE'VE ALREADY ACHIEVED A LOT

Together we're supporting better solutions than a prison cell for kids, such as Indigenous-led programs that build kids up rather than knocking them down.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (ATSIL) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (FVPLS) suffered huge cuts in the budget last year. After a groundswell of public opposition to these cuts the money was reinstated meaning Indigenous people will have access to these critical services. This is a crucial first step, in the ongoing fight for adequate funding.

Just days after our petition launched, the Western Australian Government announced it would fund a mentoring and support program for Aboriginal kids run by the Aboriginal Legal Service of WA. It's a good first step and the first time the WA government has ever funded the Aboriginal Legal Service.

And, on 5 June, we received word that the government has locked in \$440,000 over two years for the Yiriman Project, an Indigenous-led cultural program for kids at risk of being caught in the justice system -- highlighted in Amnesty's Western Australian report. Previously the Yiriman Project had also never received WA Government funding.

It's clear that when we take action together, in large numbers, governments have to act.

Successes will be uploaded in the Community is everything section of the portal as they happen.

[Keep an eye out here!](#)

Our power grows with each conversation you have! Your work on this campaign will mean we will be stronger in the future. The more people who sign up, the more we can build our movement and the more powerful we become.



Activists at the Perth launch of the Community is Everything campaign. Richard Wainwright / AI

GIVE ME THE DETAILS!

THE CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES IN FULL

We have a campaign plan mapped out over 5 years. Here is a table outlining each of the things we want and when we hope to achieve them.

We'll begin campaigning for some of these things this year and start to phase others in throughout the span of the 5 year campaign. The strategies to achieve later objectives will be developed as the campaign progresses to take into account the changing environment, elections and political commitments. We'll be sure to update you through this process through campaign updates, toolkits and through your community organiser.

2015	The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) starts to develop a long term plan to reduce the number of Indigenous kids in detention
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• COAG to take the lead in improving data collection for all governments so it can better inform policy and improve investment in programs that work as alternatives to detention.• The Australian Government works with states and territory governments to make sure the funding of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) meets community need.
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WA ends mandatory sentencing of kids by 2017• WA Police practice is changed to improve accountability about why Indigenous kids are cautioned less often than non-Indigenous kids. Under the changes a 'failure to caution notice' must be filled out, giving reasons whenever a young person is arrested instead of cautioned.• Australian Government takes responsibility for ensuring state and territory government's laws comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This means applying pressure on all governments to ensure that detention of children is a last resort, mandatory sentencing is abolished, the age of criminal responsibility is lifted to 12yrs and 17 year olds are not prosecuted as adults.
2018	Governments increase funding for Indigenous led prevention and diversion programs as well as youth and family legal services under their long term, evidence based plan.
2019	By 2020 a 25 per cent reduction Indigenous youth detention in an average year!

THE OVERALL POLITICAL PLAN

The only thing that will work to resolve this issue sustainably is to have all levels of government- federal, state and territory- working together in a coordinated way. They each have responsibility for different things, and without cooperation different governments could undermine each other and any strategy.

Indigenous kids are 24 times more likely to be locked up nationally, and while statistics vary across States and Territories, levels of over-representation are unacceptable. The fact is that all states and territories can do better.

The tough on crime approach is failing the whole community, which is why a long term strategy with buy in from all sides of politics and across all states is needed. There are promising signs that some states and territories are starting to look at solutions that will keep kids out of detention, for example, adopting a Justice Reinvestment approach, which has had amazing results in the US. The community of Bourke in New South Wales are blazing the trail in Australia when it comes to Justice Reinvestment. Through their vision, drive and the case they are building for change through [the Maranguka initiative](#), Bourke community leaders are showing the New South Wales Government that alternative strategies work!

Federal, state and territory governments coming together at the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting at the end of this year presents us with an exciting opportunity. It's in this space they work together on different issues that affect each of them at and it's the best place to get them to work together on this issue. We need to work together to create the best strategy to reduce Indigenous kids in prison and community led solutions based on the justice reinvestment approach. This means each state and territory government is critical to national change.

The federal government also has a role in COAG and can be very influential on state and territory governments. Prime Minister Abbott chairs COAG meetings and plays an important role in setting the agenda.

At this point in the campaign, the real power will come from putting pressure on state and territory MPs and they should take priority for lobbying. We need to write to them, call them, meet with them, hold activities and attract media in their communities so that when their Premier or Chief Minister goes to COAG they are ready to work towards a solution.



The Indigenous Rights team and Government Relations Manager Steph Cousins outside Parliament House.

WEEK OF ACTION

28 SEPTEMBER

COAG is the most important point for our campaign this year. It's when state, territory and federal governments will meet and talk about how they can work together on issues of national importance- like this one! Earlier this year they met and they noted that community safety and Indigenous kids in the justice system were important issues, which is a good start.

Where do I fit?

Our Action Groups will be integral in building power and momentum by raising awareness of the campaign and our recommendations in their communities. There are lots of different ways that your group can be a part of this.

What is COAG?

COAG or the Council of Australian Governments is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia.

The members of COAG are the Prime Minister, State and Territory Premiers and Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association. The Prime Minister chairs COAG.

The role of COAG is to promote policy reforms that are of national significance, or which need co-ordinated action by all Australian governments.

COAG meets as needed, usually once or twice a year, though at times it has met up to four times in a year. COAG may also settle issues out-of-session by correspondence.

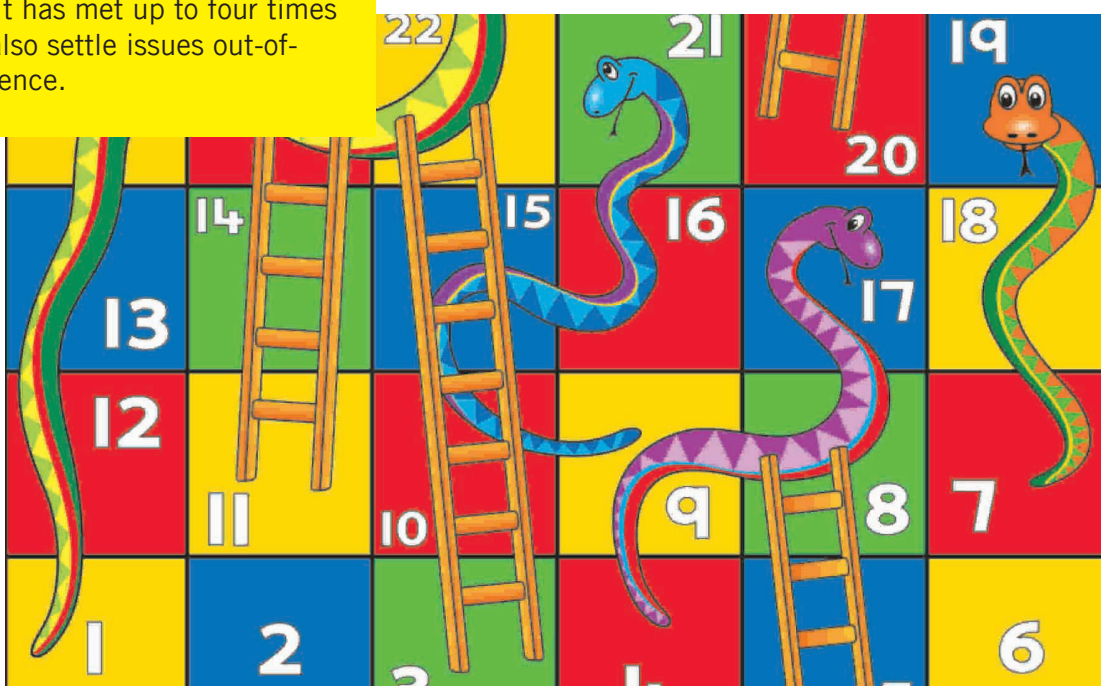
National Week of Action (28 Sept- 4 Oct)

The dates have been confirmed! In the previous toolkit we mentioned that we may only have two weeks notice and will need to respond within this timeframe. This notice period is now less certain so we have adjusted the strategy accordingly and set a concrete week of action 28 September to 4 October.

There are lots of things you can do to be part of the national week of action. Anything that generates petition signatures, helps us build power, grabs media attention or shows your local MP that people in your community care. Here are some ideas:

- Petition blitz - get out on the street, raise awareness and gather petition signatures
- Visit your MP during the week of action
- Hold an event, invite your MP and let the local media know

Action groups in or around the electorates of state premiers or territory chief ministers will be holding stunts outside their electorate offices using **giant snakes and ladders boards** where the snakes will represent the things that lead to high rates of Indigenous kids in detention and the ladders are the solutions we are campaigning for. You can support their work by attending the event or doing activities at the same time to build the momentum across the country. Talk to your local Community Organiser or Activism Support Coordinator for more information and to brainstorm ideas.



THIS YEAR WE NEED TO LOBBY STATE AND TERRITORY MPS

In early June we released the national overview and WA report. We have already had some really great community, media and political engagement including lobbying meetings with over 60 politicians and senior public servants. Our reports are getting traction with some positive comments from the Minister of Indigenous Affairs, Nigel Scullion, the Federal Labor Opposition and the WA Corrective Services and Police Commissioners.

But it's still not enough. To get state and territory governments on board we need to make local MPs accountable. To make them accountable we need to get active in their electorates, talk to their constituents and gather as many signatures on the petition as possible. This can be done at a stall, an event or through your workplace, family or friend networks.

But signatures alone won't be enough. The local polities need to know that you're busy collecting signatures and talking to their constituents about the issue. It'll mean they give much more weight to the issue, will consider their position more carefully hopefully leading to the putting pressure on their premier or chief minister.

GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR MP: VISIT OR SEND A LETTER

One of the most effective ways you can get the attention of your local MP is to get active in their electorate and, importantly, let them know you're active.

Visiting your MP

To schedule a meeting with your MP you'll need to do a couple of things.

1. Write or email your local MP requesting a meeting. Introduce yourself as a constituent and explain you'd like to meet to discuss Indigenous kids and the justice system. [Find your local MP here](#), or if you already know your MP [find their contact details here](#).
2. Follow up with a phone call. More than one if necessary!
3. Be ready to meet with the MP's staff if the MP

isn't available. But remember your MP works for you - it is entirely reasonable that they make the time to meet you!

4. Ask your Action Centre to find how many Amnesty members live in your area .. that gives you more power in having conversations. You represent XX many votes.

You can find more detail about arranging a meeting on page 7 of the Guide to Effective Advocacy.

DURING YOUR MEETING

Introduce yourself. Explain who you are and why you care about the situation facing Indigenous kids.

Know your issue. Be well-briefed on the key points and use facts and examples to back up your arguments. Quoting from Amnesty International material will add credibility and legitimacy to your briefing. You can also print out and share [Amnesty reports like this one](#). If you're in WA you should [use the WA report](#).

Honesty is the best policy. If you're asked a question in the meeting that you do not know the answer to, simply say that you will get back to them on this issue in writing (and make sure you do!)

Explain what you are asking your MP to do.

Your local MP is working for you - they are your representative in Parliament (even if you didn't vote for them!) So as a constituent you have every right to ask them to take action. Ask your MP to raise this issue with their Parliamentary colleagues and to write to the Premier or Chief Minister. Importantly, ask them to get back to you when they have taken action. It's also a good idea to leave a copy of the national report summary with them.

Tip!

It's a good idea to plan out your meeting before you go in. That way you can make sure you've got a plan to fit all the things you want to say into the time allocated. Page 8 of the Guide to Effective Advocacy has an example meeting plan you can use as a guide to map out yours.

Remember!

When speaking as a concerned member of your community you don't need to be an expert. For example, when speaking about Indigenous kids in the justice system you just need to know four simple facts:

- Indigenous kids are 24 times more likely to be locked up and we need a long term strategy to fix this
- Amnesty research shows that Indigenous communities have the solutions and your government should support them to give the next generation of kids the best start in life and improve community safety
- COAG is best placed to develop a smart long term plan for lasting change. Our state is critical to COAG action on this long-term plan and we need your help
- At the state/territory level:
- adopt a justice reinvestment approach that focused resources on keeping kids out of detention and in the community; and
- make sure your criminal laws that apply to kids comply with the Convention on the Rights of the Child by using detention as a last resort and raising the age of criminal responsibility to 12

AFTER THE MEETING

Within a week of the meeting write back to your MP thanking them for the productive meeting, and reminding them to advise you of any action they take on your behalf (ie. if they agree to write to the Premier or Chief Minister, they should let you know when they have done so).

Our Amnesty Government Relations team would love to know how your meeting goes! Contact us at activism@amnesty.org.au to tell us if you had a meeting and what happened.

MP ENGAGEMENT TRAINING: BEGINNERS, ADVANCED AND PRACTICAL

MP engagement training will be run via Webinar with Guy Ragen our Government Relations Advisor. Guy comes to us with a breadth of experience working in government and with other campaigning organisations. He will be running 2 sessions-- you're welcome to RSVP for both!

Once you've completed the beginners and advanced training you will be able to request the MP Engagement practical skills training from your community organiser.

Beginners

Beginners training will include an overview of the federal government, power and influence as well as the practicalities of developing a local MP engagement strategy, calling or writing to your MP and having a meeting with them or their office. This is a must if you're new to lobbying.

Advanced

The advanced training will look at power and influence in government and political parties in more detail, the responsibility of different levels of government and how they impact each other along with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and more detailed strategy for the Community is Everything campaign. If you've completed the beginners training or took part in the previous round of training this is the session for you!

Practical skills training

This practical module of training is available for groups who have members who've completed either the beginners or Advanced MP Engagement training. This module will build your practical skills in lobbying and help you develop a strong political engagement strategy specific to your local area and your MP. It's a chance to develop the strategy together as a group and practice different elements to you can get the best out of your interactions with your MP. This is Jedi master level. Talk to your community organiser about arranging a session.