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Hello fellow activists! Since the last release of the Violence Against Aboriginal Australian's Newsletter the Australian Human Rights Commission has published a new report discussing the rate of deaths under police and prison custody. The new report has shown that there has been an INCREASE of 15 deaths since the last report from the 2019-2020 sector. (Human Rights Commission, 2023). So, what does this mean for Aboriginal Australians? What can allies do to help?

The New Report

The [Australian Human Rights Commission](#) released their new report on Indigenous Deaths in Custody. This report is filled with critical information that explores how police violence and deaths in custody are having an increasingly negative impact on Aboriginal Australians. Via inquests, it has been discovered that the number of Aboriginal deaths in custody has increased by 15 since the previous report contributing to the total of 516 identified Aboriginal Australians that have died under police and prison custody since the formation of the royal commission in 1987. (Human Rights Commission, 2023). More data from this report tells us that younger Aboriginal Australians are at higher risk of dying under police custody than older non-Aboriginal Australians.



(ABC News, 2020)

Reflections of the Report in Australian Society

The report is a direct reflection of what we have been seeing in the media in relation to police violence against Aboriginal Australians. [In February of 2023, an over 300-page coronial inquest into the death of Veronica Nelson](#), a 37-year-old Aboriginal woman who died in prison custody on January 2, 2020. The last days of Nelson's life were, according to coroner Simon McGregor, "inhumane" due to the severity of the medical neglect and degrading cruelty that led to her preventable death. (Phillips, 2023). Nelson, while in agony due to suffering from Wilkie's Syndrome caused by opiate withdrawal and malnutrition.

Nelson's death was preventable, but due to the stigmatising of Aboriginal people and people suffering with addiction, Veronica Nelson was neglected and passed away in her prison cell. A death such as this reflects findings in the Human Rights Commission report as it demonstrates an event linked to the increase of Aboriginal Australians dying under prison custody.

Learn more about Veronica and her passing here: <https://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/02/08/dhek-fn8.html>



(BBC, 2021)

(ABS, 2023)



(SMH, 2020)

Creating Change

Although we need the Australian Government to step up and enforce the recommendations of the Royal Commission more diligently than they have been, there are ways that we are able to help. Standing with Australian First Nation Individuals is important, some ways this can be done is through the signing of petitions, visit the [Stop Black Deaths in Custody](#) Facebook page, to find and share petitions, GoFundMe's and other resources to help those that have been directly impacted by the issues of police violence and deaths in custody. Educate yourself, staying educated on these issues is extremely important in being able to maintain efforts to assist Aboriginal Australians in these issues, watch [Will Australian ever have a Black Prime Minister](#), to better understand the political and legal barriers and issues that contribute to the hardships faced by Aboriginal Australians in contemporary society.