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ONCE AGAIN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FAILS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

The protests, anger and dismay over the three year sentence of a man that killed 14 year old Elijah Doughty in Kalgoorlie, WA, come amidst a continuous history of negative treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by the justice system.

We should reasonably expect that chasing a young boy with a car and killing him, regardless of the individuals involved, would attract a sentence that adequately reflected the enormity of the loss and the circumstances in which it occurred. It is understandable that Elijah's family and community feel that they have been let down by the justice system and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people around the country are questioning the value placed on their lives and the lives of their children.

On 22 January, in a Radio National Background Briefing report after Elijah's death, Aboriginal people in Kalgoorlie describe the lack of action or support by Police in response to very threatening hate speech by a local social media group. Regular threats, violence and intimidation were similarly ignored by police, according to the report. This context cannot be ignored in relation to the response by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

National Congress stands with Elijah's family and the Kalgoorlie community in mourning the death of Elijah and condemns the openly hostile racism and vigilante behaviour that preceded the death of Elijah. We continue to work towards equality of rights, justice and respect for all people of this country.

It is in the best interests of the whole community to find common ground and focus on shared goals of creating harmony and respect between all residents, creating a sense of belonging and pride in their community and working towards a positive future. These can only be achieved when all members of the community are treated equally and given the same opportunities. The issues in Kalgoorlie go much deeper than the need for recreation facilities, but that would be a great start in listening to the local community and ensuring they feel heard. Congress urges local and state authorities to work quickly to answer these calls for assistance from the community.

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