



MP says jail is good for young Aboriginal people; A Northern Territory Government politician says some Aboriginal people support imprisonment because jail gets the younger generations sober, fed and keeps them safe.

Timms, Penny.
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A Northern Territory Government politician says some Aboriginal people support imprisonment because jail gets the younger generations sober, fed and keeps them safe.

Overnight, the Legislative Assembly passed amendments to the NT Sentencing Act, allowing for mandatory sentencing of violent offenders.

Labor opposed the bill and raised concerns it would continue to see Indigenous people locked up at an alarming rate.

The member for Stuart, Bess Price, told Parliament Labor did nothing to address the matter when it was in power, and argued that incarceration had some benefits.

"While they are being imprisoned, they don't get to drink, they don't get into trouble, they are fed three times a day," she said.

"They are in there with their family members.

"They sleep in their language groups and they all come out of prison much healthier."

Labor's member for Nhulunbuy, Lynne Walker, told Parliament she was saddened by Ms Price's statement and said it painted a disturbing scenario.

"What a very sad indictment it is, of where our system is, when the Member for Stuart says that our families want our young people locked up, because prisons; they're safe places, it's where people can dry out for three months, it's a safe environment and where, sadly, a lot of family members are in there, so they're not alone," she said.

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) says the comments by Ms Price reflect a sad state of affairs.

NAAJA principal legal officer Jonathon Hunyor says while the comments are valid, prison is not the solution.

"We think that Bess Price is right when she identifies the problem," he said.

"For some people, the conditions are very bad but the solution isn't sending people to prison.

"The millions of dollars we spend on locking people up, we should be spending on improving the lives of Aboriginal people."