



THE SENATE

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

15 November 2023

Senate committee meets with First Nations families to discuss missing and murdered women and children

Throughout 2023, as part of its inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children, the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs References Committee has met with First Nations families to discuss their experiences following the death or disappearance of a loved one.

Prior to meeting with families, the committee gave careful consideration to the conduct of its inquiry and took advice from a range of experts about best practice approaches to its work. In conducting hearings and engaging with the families of missing and murdered First Nations women and children, the committee has taken into account the advice of those experts and endeavoured to create a culturally appropriate and culturally safe forum for families to share their experiences.

To date, the committee has sat down with families in Northern NSW, Western Australia and Queensland to hear about their experiences in their own words. During 2024, it is the committee's intention to travel to other parts of Australia, including the Northern Territory, and meet with other families.

In its discussions with families, the committee has heard about the conduct of police, coroners and public prosecutors, and their engagement with First Nations families. Many of the issues raised are consistent across jurisdictions, and some are deeply troubling. The committee has sought to take evidence from state police, coroners and public prosecutors, to hear about the challenges they face and the steps they are taking to improve their practices and approaches when working with First Nations families affected by a death or disappearance.

The inquiry is continuing into 2024, with the committee's final report due by 30 June 2024.

Further information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference and public evidence received to date, is available at:

https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Legal_and_Constitutional_Affairs/FirstNationswomenchildren.

For media comment, contact the office of Senator Paul Scarr, Committee Chair, on 02 6277 3712. For information about the inquiry process, please contact the committee secretariat on 02 6277 3560 or email legcon.sen@aph.gov.au.
