my story.
my way.

Date: 09 November 2026

OPEN LETTER
To the Chief Minister and Members of the Northern Territory Government
Re: Sexual offence law reform – getting it right for victim-survivors

We, the undersigned community organisations, call on the Northern Territory government to ensure proposed reforms to sexual offence suppression laws put the rights, safety and choices of victim-survivors first. We support reform. Victim-survivors should not face unnecessary legal barriers to telling their own stories, and the justice system must be transparent and accountable. But greater transparency must not come at the cost of exposing people who have experienced sexual violence to further harm.

This is not a question of party politics. It is a question of consent, the best interests of a child, and the responsibility we all share to protect victim-survivors. Successive governments and members from across the political spectrum have recognised the importance of strengthening sexual offence laws. We urge the current government to continue that work through careful reform informed by the victims most affected.

Other Australian jurisdictions have demonstrated that accused people can be publicly identified while retaining important protections for victim-survivors. The Northern Territory has an opportunity to learn from those reforms and develop legislation that reflects our unique circumstances.

In a small jurisdiction, particularly in remote and Aboriginal communities, naming an accused person can inadvertently identify a victim-survivor through family relationships, kinship networks and community connections. Once that information becomes public, the harm cannot simply be undone.

Children deserve particular protection. No child should have to grow up with the details of their sexual abuse permanently accessible to the public. Where a child or loved one has died as a result of sexual violence, families deserve to have their wishes considered before deeply personal information is published.

We therefore call on the government to support the six calls of the My Story. My Way. campaign:
1.Remove unnecessary barriers preventing adult victim-survivors from choosing to tell their own stories.
2.Protect children's identities, safety and long-term interests, including after death.
3.Ensure naming an accused person does not identify a victim-survivor without their consent.
4.Make informed, freely given consent central to decisions about public identification.
5.When a loved one is killed as a result of sexual violence, ensure families' wishes are considered by the courts.
6.We also demand genuine consultation with victim-survivors and specialist services before these laws are changed.

These are reasonable safeguards that should attract support from every side of politics. We acknowledge the government's stated commitment to putting victims first. We believe that commitment must include respecting a victim-survivor's right to speak, their right to remain private, and their right to decide how their experience is shared. There is no need to rush legislation of this significance. There is every reason to get it right.

We call on the government to engage meaningfully with victim-survivors, families, Aboriginal communities, legal services and specialist sexual violence organisations before finalising the proposed changes. The Northern Territory has an opportunity to lead with laws that strengthen accountability without sacrificing consent, dignity or safety.

We ask all members of the Legislative Assembly, regardless of political affiliation, to work together to achieve that outcome. Victims must have the right to speak, the right to privacy and the power to choose.

Yours sincerely,
The undersigned Northern Territory community organisations:

NAAFLS North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service
KWILS Katherine Women's Legal Service
CAAFLU 1800 088 884
CAWLS Women's Legal Service
Top End Women's Legal Service
Relationships Australia · NT
NTCOSS Northern Territory Council of Social Service
dawn HOUSE INCORPORATED
WOSSCA Womens Safety Services of Central Australia
CatholicCare NT
The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
HER STORY
Australian Childhood Foundation
Danila Dilba Health Service
THE SPOT Youth Sexual Health & Relationships Service
UNITED WORKERS UNION
Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation Northern Territory
UNIONS NT
SWOP NT
JUSTICE REFORM INITIATIVE
JAILING IS FAILING
Central Australian Family Violence and Sexual Assault Network
ntahc
AMSANT
Darwin Community LEGAL SERVICE
children's ground Ampe-kenhe Akelhe Mparntwe
JUSTICE NOT JAILS
RUBY GAEA DCASV DARWIN CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE
YWCA Australia
NORTHERN TERRITORY MENTAL HEALTH COALITION