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Justice remains elusive over Palm Island death in custody

The decision not to prosecute the police officer found to be responsible for the death of Palm Island man, Mulrunji Doomadgee has left Indigenous Queenslanders with little faith in the state's justice system, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) said today.

ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland said the Queensland Government, police and judiciary faced an enormous task to restore the confidence of the state's Indigenous people in the justice system.

"Justice has not been seen to have been done in the case of Mulrunji. Aboriginal people have told ANTaR that they believe there are still two laws in Queensland – one for back and one for white," Mr Highland said.

"They find it inconceivable that someone found by a coroner to have violently caused the death of a person in his custody and then to have lied about it should escape criminal charges," he said.

"Does anyone seriously think that if the position was reversed and an Aboriginal man caused the death of a white police officer in those circumstances that no charges would be laid?"

Mr Highland said that as a non-Indigenous Queenslander he too was outraged at the denial of justice in his home state.

He said the recent string of notorious cases involving the police and Aboriginal people had made it seem like the state was headed back to the days before the Fitzgerald Inquiry when the police were a law unto themselves and those in power turned a blind eye to their excesses.

"There are many decent men and women in the Queensland police service. They too have been horribly let down by the lack of action in response to these cases," he said.

Mr Highland said many questions remain unanswered in relation to the decision not to press charges.

"The Coroner said the initial police investigation of the death was 'inadequate and undermined the integrity of the investigation'. Did this contribute to the lack of evidence to press charges? If so, what action is being taken against those police officers responsible?"

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Mr Highland urged members of the Beattie Government not to allow the state to slip back to the bad old days when there was no public confidence in the police or judiciary.

“As young political activists many members of the Government including the Premier courageously took on the authorities over police corruption in our state,” he said.

“We need them to take the fight up again to tackle this injustice, but so far only Parliamentary Speaker, Mike Reynolds has taken a stand. Other members of the government need to join him because Queensland has come too far to allow us to slip back now,” Mr Highland said.

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