

Australian NPM contributes to global report on women in prison

Members of the Australian National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) have joined NPMs from 45 other countries to contribute to the development of a global report on women in prison, launched today by the Geneva-based [Association for the Prevention of Torture](#).

This landmark report highlights significant challenges and systemic discrimination faced by women in prisons around the globe, calling for urgent reforms and greater use of alternatives to detention.

Drawing on data and analysis from NPMs operating across Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe and Latin America, the report provides the first global analysis of women in prison based on the findings of NPMs, independent oversight bodies with a mandate to prevent torture and other ill treatment in places where people are deprived of liberty.

The [Global Report on Women in Prison: Analysis from National Preventive Mechanisms](#) (Global Report) reveals that women, who represent a small but growing percentage of the global prison population, are often subjected to systemic neglect and discrimination.

The report identifies several concerning themes affecting women in prison in the 46 countries reviewed, including:

- **Heightened risks of ill-treatment:** Women face unique challenges in prison, such as humiliating and invasive body searches, inappropriate use of solitary confinement and restraints, with particularly severe impacts on pregnant women, LGBTQIA+ women, indigenous women and women with mental health conditions.
- **Neglect of gender-specific needs:** Access to adequate healthcare, hygiene facilities and products, and mental health services often falls far short of international standards, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities.
- **Intersectional discrimination:** Foreign women, indigenous women, older women, LGBTQIA+ women, pregnant women and women from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds face specific – and sometimes greater – risks of abuse and discrimination.

Since the adoption in 2010 of the [United Nations Bangkok Rules](#), which aim to address the needs of women in the criminal justice system, important progress has been made but much remains to be done to implement these standards in practice.

The Global Report offers comprehensive recommendations to drive systemic change for women in prison, emphasising the crucial role of NPMs in driving reforms.

Key recommendations include:

- implementing gender-responsive alternatives to imprisonment for women, particularly for non-violent offences
- implementing alternatives to harmful or humiliating practices that can amount to ill treatment, such as solitary confinement, use of restraints and body searches
- ensuring access to gender-specific healthcare and mental health support
- strengthening family contact through flexible visiting arrangements and communication options
- improving staff training on gender-sensitive approaches
- addressing the specific needs of women at heightened risk of ill treatment, including pregnant women, LGBTQIA+ women, indigenous and foreign women.

The Global Report also provides good practice examples from different countries.

The Global Report is accompanied by individual country reports prepared by NPMs and Local Preventive Mechanisms operating in the 46 countries, including [here in Australia](#).

The Global Report is supported by the Government of Canada and the City of Geneva.