

Welcome to the first 'Close Don Dale Now' newsletter!

Rallies are held 5pm every Friday at Don Dale.

To keep up to date with our events you can:

- follow us on instagram (@close.don.dale)
- follow us on facebook
(<https://www.facebook.com/close.don.dale>)
- visit our website (closedondale.com)

Who We Are

'Close Don Dale Now' was formed late last year, after Donna Hunter's 10-year-old grandson spent nearly three weeks on remand in Don Dale. This shocking experience led Donna and her sister Natalie to seek the advice of John Lawrence SC. Following this, the first 'Close Don Dale Now' rally was held on Christmas day. Every Friday since, the group has gathered at Don Dale from 5pm–6pm to protest the continued use of the Don Dale facility and demand its immediate closure. We comprise both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, including previous Don Dale detainees and their families, Elders and Community members, professionals, experts, students and volunteers.

Our Goal

Close Don Dale Now is calling on the NT Government to immediately close Don Dale. We believe that getting the children out of Don Dale is an urgent aspect of a much larger need to address systemic issues facing First Nations peoples in the NT. It must not be delayed.

Why is Don Dale Still Open?

In November 2017, the final report of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory recommended that Don Dale be closed. Days after the report was handed down, the NT Government agreed 'in principle' to implement the recommendations. Chief Minister, Michael Gunner, stated that the government would complete planning for detention facilities to replace Don Dale within three months.

Since then, the completion date for the new centre has been pushed back three years. In February, the NT Government advised that the new facility will not be completed until at least mid-2023. The planned site, which is currently a pile of rocks, is located next to the adult prison in Holtze. This directly contravenes the Royal Commission's recommendation that the new facility NOT be built next to an adult prison.

The government has also failed to reform youth justice more broadly and has, in fact, exacerbated the crisis of youth incarceration.



Larrakia woman, Tanya Williams, at Don Dale



Gurindji woman and long-standing Aboriginal rights activist, Josie Crawshaw, speaking to the press about Don Dale



The new site at Holtze in February 2022

Don Dale Today

In 2022, Don Dale is still in operation and still harming children. A December 2021 report by the Children’s Commissioner found that:

- children were living in a ‘cage-like’ setting
- there were frequent rolling lockdowns
- children were isolated in their cells for up to 23.5 hours for days at a time
- there was an increase in the use of force and separations
- children were not receiving required medical assessments
- Don Dale’s lack of a therapeutic framework continued to put children at risk of lasting physical and emotional problems

Territory Families data provided to the NT News in March this year showed an alarming increase in self harm. Comparing June–December 2020 with June–December in 2021, the rate of self-harm among children in Don Dale increased by over 600%.

CDD Past Actions

In addition to our weekly rallies, 150 people attended the Invasion Day Rally (January 26) at Don Dale Youth Detention Facility and another 50 gathered at Parliament House on February 17. At each of these rallies, we have called on the government to close Don Dale **now**. Speakers have included June Mills, Josephine Crawshaw, Donna Hunter, Natalie Hunter, Rocket Bretherton, Yingiya Guyula, Pat Anderson, John Lawrence SC and Dr Paul Bauert.

On February 19, Donna Hunter and Tanya Williams presented the Labor party opposition leader, Anthony Albanese, with a letter asking the ALP to help close Don Dale.

In March, Greens senator, Lidia Thorpe, strongly criticised the NT Government for failing to act on the Royal Commission’s key recommendation to close Don Dale. She described children being held in Don Dale as an “**absolute national crisis**”.

To keep in contact about actions and events, look for us on facebook and Instagram, come along to the Friday rallies (5pm at Don Dale) or visit us at the Nightcliff market every Sunday. Thank you for your support and we look forward to seeing you again!



Kaurareg, Kalkagal, Erubamle activist and author, Thomas Mayor, and Consolata Mungatopi from Milikapiti, Tiwi Islands at Don Dale



Local Darwin woman, Donna Hunter, and Liyadhälinymirr Djambarrpuygu man, Yingiya Guyula MLA, at the Parliament House Rally



DjabWurrung Gunnai Gunditjmara woman and Greens senator, Lidia Thorpe, speaking out about Don Dale at the Beetaloo Basin senate inquiry