



## ***Review raises concerns about the use of force to carry out a strip search of an Aboriginal woman detainee at the Alexander Maconochie Centre***

On 11 January 2021 a female Indigenous detainee was subjected to a use of force by Corrections Officers who were attempting to strip search her. After a physical struggle lasting several minutes, the detainee agreed to accompany officers to a bathroom in the unit where a closed-door strip search was conducted by two female officers.

The ACT Inspector of Correctional Services, Neil McAllister, presented the critical incident review of the use of force and strip search for tabling in the ACT Legislative Assembly today. The review makes nine recommendations.

Mr McAllister said, “The review found that, contrary to some media reports, the detainee was not strip searched in front of male officers or any detainees. However, she was subjected to a planned use of force that was conducted with the intent of forcibly strip searching her.”

“While the decision to conduct a strip search was lawful under the *Corrections Management Act 2007 (ACT)*, the attempt to forcibly remove the detainee’s clothing was inconsistent with the *Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT)* which requires human rights to be considered in all decision making by a public authority.”

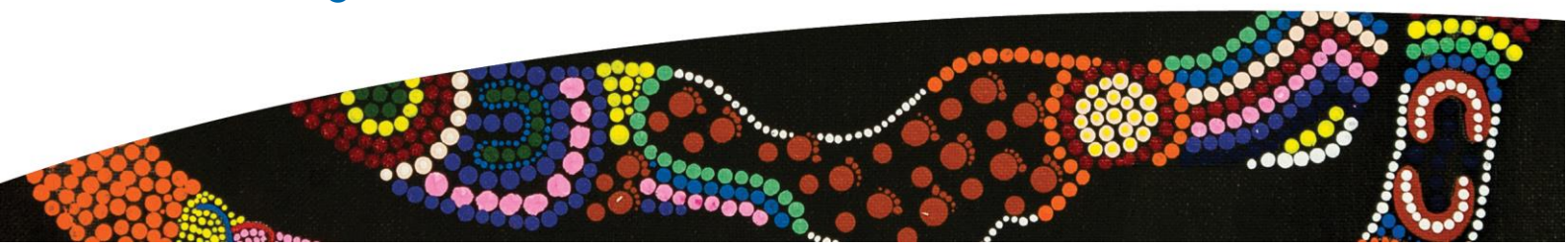
“However, ACT Corrective Services policies and procedures do not explicitly require staff to consider the impact of a forced strip search on the human rights of the detainee. The experience of this detainee being held down by officers in Tactical PPE to have clothes removed or cut off was undoubtedly degrading and traumatising”, Mr McAllister said.

“To this end, the report recommends that human rights are explicitly considered before conducting planned forced strip searches. This means considering the impact the highly intrusive procedure would have on a detainee in light of any vulnerabilities such as medical conditions or trauma histories. It also means considering if any less intrusive options are available.”

“This incident has also been stressful for some staff involved and there is no suggestion that individual officers were wilfully negligent in the performance of their duties.”

“The report recommends that ACTCS expedite the acquisition of body scanning technology that would obviate the need for strip searches in most cases. Body scanning technology has obvious benefits for detainees, and for staff, as it reduces the need for staff to be involved in a practice that they do not find pleasant.”

[ics.act.gov.au](http://ics.act.gov.au)





**ICS**  
ACT Inspector  
of Correctional  
Services

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## For more information

The full report can be found at [ics.act.gov.au](https://ics.act.gov.au)

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