

Indigenous custody reporting made more effective

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A new platform for greater data collation and reporting Credit: Bill Oxford on unsplash

The Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited ('ALS') is collaborating with Rapido Social at the University of Technology Sydney

(UTS) to improve its Custody Notification Service (CNS), following project funding from the National Indigenous Advancement Agency (NIAA).

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommended that police notify the Aboriginal Legal Service whenever an Aboriginal person is taken into [custody](#), so it can provide assistance, legal support and help safeguard their well-being.

The ALS has been operating its CNS for 20 years as a 24-hour legal advice and support hotline for any Aboriginal person taken into custody. However the service is currently reliant on an aging phone and paper based system.

ALS's Principal Legal Officer, Nadine Miles describes the current system as inefficient with double-handling.

"Outdated technology and reliance on paper based systems means that our staff are spending significant amounts of time recording and inputting data, but then being unable to effectively analyze and interpret trends in that data—which is crucial to improving the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in custody," she said.

ALS is now working with UTS Rapido, an advanced technology development unit which supports organizations to deliver hardware and [software products](#) and solutions, working with organizations across all sectors, including not-for-profits through its social innovation unit, Rapido Social.

Rapido Social Impact Manager Sophie Ritchie says the ALS project is a digital transformation process that will create a user-friendly system that makes the data it already collates more accessible for wider insights and understanding.

"Rapido Social will collaborate with ALS staff to develop a user-friendly digital platform that will optimize data collation, and draw on cutting-edge data analytics and reporting capabilities to make information more readily available for analysis by ALS, in NSW/ACT and nationally, for advocacy on behalf of individuals and communities," she explained.

Nadine Miles says the project has the potential to strengthen the ALS's advocacy, policy and law reform work.

"An improved data base will both inform and enhance ALS functions and also help meet the needs of Aboriginal people who are in custody—without a good data set, it is not possible to both demonstrate our impact and determine what and where needs are."

UTS Law Faculty Professor, Thalia Anthony, says efficient notification systems and data are vital to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody.

"The CNS has proven to save Aboriginal lives and this project will enhance its capacity. It will generate data to improve responses to the needs of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system and enable longer-term planning for support and wraparound services, she said.

Rapido and ALS say this project has the potential to lead the roll out of digital technology to support effective CNS systems nationally.

Provided by University of Technology, Sydney

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