

WA man becomes fifth Indigenous person to die in custody since start of March

The spate of Aboriginal deaths in custody has been denounced by senator Pat Dodson as a 'scandal'



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An Indigenous inmate at Perth's Casuarina prison has died in hospital, adding to a recent spate of Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The fifth death since the beginning of March involves a 45-year-old male inmate at Western Australia's main maximum-security prison.

He was taken to Fiona Stanley hospital on Friday and died on Saturday after undergoing a medical procedure and being placed in intensive care.

"His next of kin have been notified," the WA Department of Justice said on Sunday.

WA police will prepare a report for a coronial inquiry, in accordance with all deaths in custody.

There has been a spate of Indigenous deaths in custody across the country over the past month.

Barkindji man Anzac Sullivan, 37, died during a police pursuit in Broken Hill, NSW on 18 March.

Another man died in Victoria's Ravenhall correctional centre on 7 March and a woman in her 50s died in custody in NSW on the same day.

A man in his 30s died in NSW on 2 March.

The recent wave of fatalities prompted Indigenous senator Pat Dodson to warn another royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody could be needed unless there were major efforts to address the national scourge.

More than 450 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have died in custody since the release of the 1991 landmark royal commission report.

With the 30-year anniversary of the 339 recommendations next month, Indigenous leaders are demanding more action to fix the shameful statistics.

Senator Dodson pursued bureaucrats at a parliamentary inquiry on 26 March over what action was being taken to address deaths in custody.

"Use your influence, because this is a scandal. An absolute scandal," he told assistant attorney-general Amanda Stoker.

Senator Stoker said 91% of the royal commission's recommendations had been fully implemented before noting many drivers of incarceration rates needed state and territory action.