

NATIONAL FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEGAL SERVICES

WORKING TO ACHIEVE IMPROVED JUSTICE OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
VICTIMS/SURVIVORS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT

Media Release

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No safety, no certainty: crucial investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence missing from Budget 2019-20

For the sixth year in a row, the Federal Budget brings no additional core funding for the crucial supports provided by Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs), with funding to end 30 June 2020. Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum called on all parties to commit to ongoing funding and to keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women safe.

“This Budget provided the Government with an opportunity to commit to ongoing funding for FVPLSs and this is missing, yet again. We have had no CPI or increase in core funding since 2013-14. Our funding ends 30 June 2020 and not knowing in this budget isn’t good enough for our services, for our staff but most importantly the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women we work with’, Ms Braybrook said.

Funding in the Budget of \$35 million to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by family violence through the Fourth Action Plan under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* had already been announced. This includes intensive case management funding in “remote areas and areas of high need” and trauma-based intervention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and adults at risk of experiencing or using family violence.

“We have already welcomed this previous announcement. However, I made the point that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in all parts of the country – urban, regional and remote – must receive this funding. Tens of thousands of women and children currently have no access to crucial, specialist and culturally safe services such as FVPLSs,” Ms Braybrook said.

“FVPLSs must be recognised for the specialised work we do – we don’t just provide legal services, but assist primarily women and their children with a whole range of factors impacting their lives and work to keep them safe by preventing family violence. We call on the Government and all parties to finally recognise this.”

“We welcome the funding commitment to the Partnership Approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peaks for the Closing the Gap Refresh which the National FVPLS Forum is a part of. We are however very concerned with the proposal to roll Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) into a single national mechanism for legal assistance funding. FVPLSs stand with ATSILS as specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and call on the Attorney-General to overturn the decision and maintain a standalone specific program for ATSILS”, Ms Braybrook said.

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“In the lead-up to the May Federal election we will be asking all parties to commit to our calls for ongoing long term funding; a substantial increase in core funding and CPI; and re-establishing a stand-alone funding stream for FVPLSs. This is to recognise FVPLSs as specialist providers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, commit to keeping our women and children safe, and supporting our self-determination”.

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