

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

17 November 2017

Investing in Aboriginal organisations essential to promote child well-being and resilience, says landmark NT Royal Commission report

The value and importance of access to quality, holistic, wrap-around, culturally safe legal and non-legal supports and services is fundamental to creating a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, according to the landmark findings of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

The National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) has welcomed the Royal Commission's report and recommendations, particularly the emphasis placed on community-based early intervention and prevention initiatives for families and children.

"The Royal Commission has acknowledged the inherent links between family violence, the child protection system and the detention of children," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum.

"Through our extensive frontline work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, our services know that family violence is a leading cause of the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families," said Ms Braybrook. "Family violence is also a significant underlying cause of children ending up in prison, as well as imprisonment in adult life."

"Any measures to prevent exposure to the child protection system and youth detention necessarily involves reducing and preventing family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children," said Ms Braybrook.

The Royal Commission's report identifies that:

- the Northern Territory has some of the highest rates of domestic and family violence in the world, and that Aboriginal women and their children experience family violence at disproportionate rates in the Northern Territory;
- there is a clear pathway from childhood experiences of domestic and family violence and trauma to contact with the child protection and youth justice systems;
- safe housing to support women leaving violent relationships is required;
- targeted, holistic responses are needed, enabled by funding the Aboriginal community controlled sector to provide this support.

Media Release

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The Royal Commission has recommended the establishment of a network of Family Support Centres across the Northern Territory to provide services to and support families and children.

“The key to achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is the ability to access Aboriginal community-controlled organisations that provide quality, holistic, culturally safe legal services and supports,” said Ms Braybrook.

“The Royal Commission’s report highlights the central role that Aboriginal organisations have to play to reduce rates of child removal and detention.”

“These issues are not just isolated to the Northern Territory,” said Ms Braybrook. “As the Prime Minister’s press release acknowledges, ‘many of the recommendations have wider implications for all jurisdictions’.”

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 10 times more likely to die of violent assault than other women.

“The Royal Commission has done its important work”, said Ms Braybrook. “Now is the time for the Northern Territory and Federal Governments to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to take immediate and concrete action to ensure real and meaningful change in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, both in the Northern Territory and nationally.”

The National FVPLS Forum called on the Northern Territory and Federal Governments to move swiftly to implement the Royal Commission’s recommendations.

“Even one day in detention causes enormous damage to the future of children. Governments must respond to these important recommendations without delay,” said Ms Braybrook.

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