

# 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

28 October 2016

## **Third Action Plan to address family violence welcome, but immediate and concrete action needed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children**

The Federal Government's national blueprint for addressing family violence has been welcomed by the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Forum (National FVPLS Forum), but the Forum has stressed that immediate and concrete action is needed to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children with the services and supports that they desperately need.

"The Third Action Plan recognises the disproportionate experiences of family violence by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum. "Importantly, the Third Action Plan recognises the need to develop culturally appropriate policies, programs and primary prevention activities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are disproportionately impacted by family violence. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 10 times more likely to die of violent assault than other women.

"It is now time for Turnbull Government to match this recognition with tangible action that will make a difference in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children," said Ms Braybrook. "Access to services and supports is literally a life or death matter for women and children in our community."

Ms Braybrook welcomed \$9 million in extra funding announced by Minister Scullion for Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, which provides funding certainty at current levels until June 2018. "Any additional funding for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services is particularly welcome, and this funding will provide certainty for another 12 months," said Ms Braybrook.

The National FVPLS Forum also cautiously welcomed additional funding for the Third Action Plan announced by Minister Scullion for measures to tackle family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. "We are yet to see the details of how this funding will be distributed, but we know that we need far greater investment in culturally appropriate, holistic services and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women."

Ms Braybrook explained that Family Violence Prevention Legal Services remain chronically under-funded. "We need an immediate increase in funding for essential legal and support services," said Ms Braybrook. "Our Family Violence Prevention Legal Services are frontline services that provide quality, culturally safe and holistic supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of family violence."

Media Release

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While the funding announced by Minister Scullion is welcome, Ms Braybrook expressed disappointment that a funding package for legal assistance services for family violence did not involve any funding for Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs) or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS). “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the most legally disadvantaged group in Australia. The Attorney-General has missed an opportunity to provide our country’s most vulnerable group with increased access to quality, culturally appropriate, holistic legal services and supports.”

A number of long term initiatives put in place during the first two Action Plans are delivering results. Support for these initiatives needs to remain a priority, as breaking the cycle of violence and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children requires both short and long term strategies.

These announcements were made following the COAG Family Violence Summit hosted in Brisbane today. The National FVPLS Forum was pleased to participate in the Summit and looks forward to working with all Australian governments on the implementation of the Third Action Plan.

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