

# 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

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## **Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors access to legal services essential to address family violence**

The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) welcomes Prime Minister Malcom Turnbull's family and domestic violence package announced today, but is disappointed it did not include a focus on improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors access to essential frontline legal services.

"It was heartening to hear Prime Minister Turnbull indicate a desire to address the national epidemic of family violence," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum. "FVPLSs are the frontline services providing critical legal and non-legal support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence. Regrettably today's package did not include measures that would enable us to further support some of the most marginalised women in the country. We want to work with the Prime Minister to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can access our specialised services."

Family violence impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at vastly disproportionate rates and has devastating impacts. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and almost 11 times more likely to be killed as a result of violent assault than other Australians.

"For too long the impacts of family violence in our communities have been hidden. The time has come to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women," said Ms Braybrook "The time has come to act."

In October 2014, FVPLSs were forced to competitively tender for their services under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. No longer recognised as a dedicated national program, FVPLSs have no secure or transparent commitment for Commonwealth funding and, without CPI increases, the declining funds available will mean losses to frontline staff providing services.

Ms Braybrook said, "The National FVPLS Forum is calling on the Turnbull Government to reinstate the National FVPLS Program with a direct allocation and long term commitment of funding. A reinvigorated National FVPLS Program should achieve national coverage of FVPLS services commensurate with need within metropolitan and urban locations as well as the rural and remote areas currently funded by the Commonwealth. Without a dedicated national program that can ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors can access the holistic frontline services we provide we fear Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence will again be marginalised."

The National FVPLS Forum will be seeking a meeting with the Prime Minister to discuss the national crisis of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence.

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