



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Significant impact of funding cuts to legal assistance services emphasised on anniversary of National Apology**

On the anniversary of the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, the peak bodies for Community Legal Centres (CLCs), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and Family Violence Prevention Legal Centres (FVPLS) call on the Australian Government to end uncertainty about funding and provide direct and adequate levels of Commonwealth funding to legal assistance services.

The Prime Minister has declared himself the Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs, but at the same time the Australian Government has already announced funding cuts to CLCs and ATSILS that provide legal assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and defunded the National FVPLS Program leaving FVPLS' facing significant funding uncertainty.

Michael Smith, Chair of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC) commented that the "funding cuts and uncertainty for CLCs, ATSILS and FVPLS have, and will continue to have, a significant effect on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients".

Eddie Cubillo, Executive Officer of peak body National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, which has been defunded, added that "these cuts will not only have a devastating impact for our services but also the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access justice."

"In reality, we need secure long term commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to make a difference and to address the challenges highlighted in reports such as the Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report released this week" emphasised Antoinette Braybrook, National FVPLS Convenor.

All three peak bodies renew calls on all levels of Government to commit the additional \$200 million identified in the recent Productivity Commission Report as being required to adequately fund legal assistance services in Australia.

Ends

For further information or to arrange an interview contact: NACLC Chair Michael Smith 0421 437 883; ATSILS Executive Officer Eddie Cubillo 0407 084 619; National FVPLS Convenor Antoinette Braybrook (03) 9244 3333

*NACLC acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands across Australia and particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional owners of the land on which the NACLC office is situated. We pay deep respect to Elders past and present.*