

# 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

27 October 2016

Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory  
PO Box 4215  
Kingston ACT 2604

By email: [ChildDetentionNT@royalcommission.gov.au](mailto:ChildDetentionNT@royalcommission.gov.au)

Dear Commissioners

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to the Royal Commission to assist with planning your future work.

The National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) strongly supports the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. Given the focus in the Terms of Reference on both the protection and detention of children in the Northern Territory, the National FVPLS Forum considers it is essential that the Commission's work also consider issues relating to the prevention of family violence and reducing barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence to access quality, holistic, culturally safe legal services and supports.

The National FVPLS Forum works collaboratively with our 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs) across the country. FVPLSs were established over 16 years ago in recognition of the significant gap in access to legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors of family violence and sexual assault. The primary function of FVPLSs is to provide legal assistance, casework, counselling and court support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children who are victims/survivors of family violence. FVPLSs also provide essential community legal education and early intervention and prevention activities.

Through our extensive work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children to address the multitude of interrelated issues that our clients face, FVPLSs have developed a deep understanding of the inherent links between family violence, the child protection system and the detention of children. Family violence is a leading cause of child removal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Family violence is also a significant underlying cause of children and young people being exposed to youth detention, and is both a cause and consequence of imprisonment in adult life.

Accordingly, any consideration of options and pathways to prevent exposure to the child protection system and youth detention necessarily involves consideration of measures to reduce and prevent family violence. The ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children to access quality, holistic, culturally safe legal services and supports is essential in this regard.

We would be very happy to provide further information to contribute to the Royal Commission's important work. Please contact Ben Schokman [bschokman@fvpls.org](mailto:bschokman@fvpls.org) or 0403 622 810 if the National FVPLS Forum or our member organisations can assist in any way.

Yours sincerely



**Antoinette Braybrook**

Convenor, National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum