

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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Devastating cuts to Aboriginal family violence legal services

The Federal Government will achieve its ill-advised election promise by making \$43 million in devastating cuts to legal assistance services that support some of the most disadvantaged people in Australia. Yesterday the National Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) program was advised of \$3.6 million in cuts over the next three years.

Aboriginal women experience disproportionately high rates of family violence and are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence-related assault than other Australian women.

“We know from the statistics that rates of family violence are increasing, but instead of addressing this national crisis, governments are cutting our funding and restricting our services. They are playing politics with the safety of our women and children,” said National Convenor Antoinette Braybrook.

“Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence already face many barriers to accessing justice. It is so disappointing to see that the new Government has taken the opportunity to make things more difficult for people, instead of supporting initiatives that address family violence,” said Ms Braybrook.

The Government claims that funding will be taken from policy and law reform programs, and front line services will not be impacted. “Clearly our Government doesn’t understand how FVPLS services operate. There is simply no such funding provided for individual services to engage in policy and law reform. Services will have no choice but to cut back frontline service delivery given that this is where services direct their funding,” said Ms Braybrook.

“Cuts to services mean fewer victims of family violence will have access to legal and support services to keep them safe,” said Ms Braybrook.

Family violence is a significant contributing factor in child protection interventions, family law matters, physical and mental health issues, and imprisonment rates, all of which will have high costs for government into the future. “Rather than reduce service funding, we look to government to work with us by investing in legal and support services that address family violence, and thereby increase access to justice for the most vulnerable people in our society,” concluded Ms Braybrook.

Media Contact: Antoinette Braybrook, National FVPLS Convenor (03) 9244 3333

<http://www.nationalfvpls.org/>

Media Release