

# 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

## Media Release

25 February 2014

### **Attorney-General Brandis, an open invitation to visit an Aboriginal community controlled legal service**

The Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) program is issuing an open invitation to the Commonwealth Attorney-General to visit our regional and remote services, to clear up any misunderstanding about the differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services. This invitation follows the Attorney-General's remarks in yesterday's Senate Estimates hearing about his recent visit to Aboriginal legal services, in which he referred to a generalist, non-Aboriginal community legal centre (CLC).

"While we work closely with community legal centres, and strongly value the work they do, CLCs are quite different to Aboriginal specific legal services. Visiting a mainstream community legal centre will not give the Attorney-General a good understanding of the work FVPLS or other Aboriginal specific services do," said FVPLS National Convenor, Antoinette Braybrook.

The FVPLS program provides culturally safe legal assistance to Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence, in areas including intervention orders, victims' assistance, child protection and family law. "Senator Brandis is the Minister responsible for legal assistance services. It is so important that he understands the distinction between mainstream legal assistance services and Aboriginal specific services, like FVPLSs," said Antoinette Braybrook. "Given the increasing rate of domestic and family violence across Australia, now more than ever it is important for governments to recognise the critical work that the FVPLS program is doing. We would like to take this opportunity to work more closely with the Attorney-General to ensure he has a clear understanding of the issues impacting on Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and the services that assist."

The Attorney-General also spoke about the impact of cuts to legal assistance services, describing them as being 'designed carefully so that savings would be found in policy and advocacy.' "More evidence our Government doesn't understand how FVPLS services operate. There is simply no such funding provided to individual services for policy and advocacy, nor has there ever been since the commencement of the program in 1998. Already under-resourced services will have to cut back frontline service delivery given that this is where funding is directed," said Ms Braybrook. Cuts to services will inevitably mean fewer victims of family violence will have access to legal and support services to keep them safe.

"The Attorney-General is welcome to visit our services anytime to better understand our services, the work we do and impact of funding cuts. We extend an open invitation to him to meet with leaders of our organisations." Ms Braybrook concluded.

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

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