

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

20 September 2017 – For immediate release

UN urges urgent action to eliminate family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

The Australian Government needs to undertake a comprehensive review of policies as a national priority, according to a major United Nations report released in Geneva today on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

“The UN expert’s report reflects what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been demanding for years,” said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum). “The Australian Government must do much more to ensure the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including to reduce the unacceptably high rates of family violence against our women and children.”

“The UN report identifies a number of key issues, including the under-funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and the lack of a dedicated national plan to reducing family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children,” said Ms Braybrook. “The Australian Government must implement these important recommendations as a matter of urgency.”

The comprehensive report, which will be tabled in the UN Human Rights Council by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Rights in Geneva today, makes nearly 50 recommendations to the Australian Government. The report was prepared following a country visit to Australia by the Special Rapporteur in April 2017, which involved consultations with many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples including the National FVPLS Forum.

Among other issues, the UN Special Rapporteur’s report:

- identifies that discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on the grounds of gender, race and class is structurally and institutionally entrenched;
- expresses concern that Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services need additional financial support to address high levels of unmet need; and
- recommends that a specific national action plan on violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women should be developed, in close consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The report also calls for a specific target to reduce violence against women to be included as part of the ‘Closing the Gap’ strategy.

“We are happy that the Special Rapporteur came and sat with us and listened to our concerns,” said Ms Braybrook. “It’s time for the Australian Government to listen to our voices too and ensure better recognition and participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.”

Media Release

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The National FVPLS Forum also welcomed recommendations by the Special Rapporteur that recognise the value and importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations. “The report identifies that the Australian Government could achieve immediate positive changes in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by consulting, financially supporting and working hand-in-hand with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations,” said Ms Braybrook.

“Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLSs) across the country witness the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on a daily basis,” said Ms Braybrook. “Our organisations are best-placed to support our women and their children and make serious inroads to addressing the unacceptability high rates of violence we experience.”

“This important report documents the unique challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and makes a series of practical recommendations to all Australian governments.”

“We urge all Australian governments to look at these recommendations closely and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations towards their full and effective implementation,” said Ms Braybrook.

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