

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

19th November 2015 – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Reducing family violence is central to closing the justice gap

The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum) welcomes the commitment by Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten to set targets to reduce incarceration and violence rates and close the justice gap between Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

In an address last night to the University of Melbourne Law School, Mr Shorten highlighted the alarming statistics that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result family violence, and 11 times more likely to be killed.

“We agree that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, regardless of their geographic location should have access to our holistic culturally safe legal services,” said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum.

“The devastating impacts of family violence combined with the extreme legal disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is contributing to a spiralling incarceration rate, making our women the fastest growing prison population in Australia.”

Community-controlled organisations such as the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) have a crucial role to play providing access to critical legal services and non-legal supports.

Ms Braybrook said, “We appreciate the recognition of the importance of community control, and welcome the commitment to ensuring adequate funding of community-controlled organisations into the future.”

Mr Shorten also acknowledged the role which gender inequality plays in violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Labor has promised to invest an additional \$4.5 million in FVPLSs around the country to ensure the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of family violence.

Together with the Change the Record Coalition also welcome the proposal to trial “justice reinvestment” approaches at sites in urban, regional and remote areas. Our early intervention, prevention and community legal education programs align with this approach,” said Ms Braybrook. “The proposed trial offers an exciting opportunity to further explore the benefits of early intervention and prevention by investing in people, not prisons.”

The National FVPLS Forum is a member of the Change the Record Coalition working collaboratively to address the disproportionate rates of incarceration and violence experienced by Indigenous Australians. The National FVPLS Forum will continue to work in a multi-partisan nature, working with national leaders to achieve our shared goal of reducing violence in Aboriginal communities.

Media Contact: Andy Gargett for Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor, National FVPLS Forum on 0457 544 591 or agargett@fvpls.org

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

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