

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

6 September 2013

Devastating impacts of Coalition's proposed cuts to Aboriginal legal services

The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (FVPLS Forum) is extremely disappointed in the Coalition's costings that yesterday revealed a \$42 million cut to Aboriginal legal services Australia-wide.

FVPLS services provide legal assistance to Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and sexual assault. We work alongside the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services who under the Coalition's proposal may experience significant funding cuts that will hinder Aboriginal people from having access to culturally safe and responsive legal support.

"Aboriginal people already face many barriers in accessing justice, including discrimination and lack of culturally responsive support. However, we know that Aboriginal people are more likely to access legal assistance where there are culturally safe, Aboriginal-specific services available," said National FVPLS Convenor, Antoinette Braybrook.

Ms Braybrook continued "With legal services like ours already chronically under-resourced, cuts will have immediate and devastating impacts for Aboriginal people seeking legal support, who are the victims of crime or at risk of incarceration."

Incarceration rates are already 16 times higher for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women. This rate is growing, with Aboriginal women the fastest growing prison population in the country. "The savings the Coalition will generate from this ill-advised decision will only lead to increased costs in other areas of the system, including the prison system. With both major parties saying they want to reduce the growing gap in incarceration rates between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, we need to be seeing more funding, not cuts." said Ms Braybrook.

"Tony Abbott claims he will be the Prime Minister for Aboriginal Affairs if he wins tomorrow's election. This proposal is a clear indication his commitment to Aboriginal affairs will not be extending to genuine action. Funding to Aboriginal legal services should be sustained and enhanced." Ms Braybrook concluded

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Media Release