

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 March 2015

Step up in commitments to the national crisis of family violence

Fourteen Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) heard yesterday that they have been successful in maintaining their current funding levels under the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (NFVPLS) welcome this news, which is a major relief for 14 services who have been waiting to hear if their doors will close in July. "This is a significant outcome for our services and reflects an important recognition of the value of the FVPLS Program," said Antoinette Braybrook, National Convenor. "We are pleased to know we have a future beyond 30 June. We, like many of the other organisations affected by IAS, still need security and a long term commitment to our work."

NFVPLS also welcomes yesterday's commitment by Opposition Leader Bill Shorten for a National Crisis Summit to engage with sector stakeholders and coordinate a national response to family violence. He also announced an initial investment of \$70 million over three years, including at least \$4.5 million to Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. "Family violence is an epidemic, a national crisis, and I am pleased to see that the Coalition and Opposition have both stepped up their commitments to action," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of NFVPLS. "It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors – women in particular – are fully recognised in this space and offered a key role in program and policy development. This kind of thinking is long overdue."

NFVPLS is concerned that there has been no increase in funding to our services and many are only guaranteed an additional year. This maintains many of the stresses of funding uncertainty and brings into question the long term commitment to the program. The benefits of the IAS process are also very unclear. NFVPLS was encouraged to view it as an opportunity to strengthen funding for strong performance, including for our early intervention and prevention activities subjected to budget cuts in 2012, but these hopes were not upheld.

NFVPLS continues its call on all levels of Government to make secure long-term commitments to frontline family violence services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors, including increased investment and reinstatement of the FVPLS Program. We call also for the reversal of funding cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Community Legal Centres and a commitment to an additional \$200 million investment recommended by the Productivity Commission. With no additional funding for FVPLS and other doors already closing, a huge gap remains with devastating impacts for the community.

FVPLSs provide critical frontline legal and non-legal support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence, in areas including intervention orders, victims of crime assistance, child protection and family law. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised and 10 times more likely to die from violent assault than other women.

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Media Release