

# 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

13 February 2018

### **Urgent action to prevent family violence required to make the Apology a reality**

Ten years after former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's Apology to the Stolen Generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain vastly over-represented in the child protection system, with family violence one of the single biggest drivers, according to the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum).

"Family violence-driven child removals are a national crisis," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National FVPLS Forum. "This country is removing children from their families at higher rates than any time since white settlement."

"The ground-breaking work of the Taskforce 1000 Inquiry in Victoria confirmed what services like FVPLSs with frontline experience and specialist expertise have known for a long time – that family violence is the key driver of children being removed into out-of-home care," said Ms Braybrook.

"There needs to be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner in every state and territory," said Ms Braybrook. "Across Australia, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care has doubled since the 2008 Apology. We need strong political leadership to address the devastating link between family violence and child removals."

The implementation of justice targets as part of the Closing the Gap refresh – with a particular focus on reducing family violence - is essential to address the devastating impacts of family violence and break the demonstrated pathway between out-of-home care, youth detention and adult incarceration facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In addition to justice targets to reduce family violence, the National FVPLS Forum joins the call for child protection and housing targets. Ms Braybrook says, "One important initiative that could be introduced immediately to reduce the number of child removals where family violence is a factor is an Aboriginal child protection notification referral scheme that ensures families receive early, preventative and culturally safe legal advice to reduce the risk of children being taken away and keep families safe and strong."

"Without family violence-related justice targets, our women will continue to bear the disproportionate burden of violence and our children will continue to be removed at ever-increasing rates," said Ms Braybrook.

"Ten years from now, I don't want to be in the same situation. I want to see our children safe, culturally strong and cared for by their families and communities,"

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said Ms Braybrook. “One of the best ways to reduce rates of child removal is to provide culturally safe and specialist supports for Aboriginal women experiencing violence to safely care for their children.”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services with specialist expertise in supporting victim/survivors of family violence, such as FVPLSs, are best placed to support Aboriginal women and their children who have experienced or are at risk of family violence.

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