

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

15 May 2013

No “Fair Go” for Aboriginal Women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children have again missed out on their share in last night’s federal budget. “The National Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal program (FVPLS program) is the only legal assistance program that didn’t receive a funding increase in yesterday’s budget. This is another decision that discriminates against Aboriginal communities. We are left asking Attorney General Mark Dreyfus, where is the “fair go” for Aboriginal women?” said National FVPLS Convenor Antoinette Braybrook.

“Last night’s Budget announcement is a slap in the face to the FVPLS program and Aboriginal communities.”

Commonwealth Government policy restricts the FVPLS program to providing services in rural and remote regions. “About one-third of the Aboriginal population in Australia live in urban areas, so they miss out. It is incredibly disappointing that instead of taking the opportunity to address the previous Government’s discriminatory policy, this Government is adding to it,” Ms Braybrook said.

The Attorney General’s Department funds four legal assistance programs including Legal Aid Commissions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services. The FVPLS program provides culturally safe legal assistance to Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence, in areas including intervention orders, victims’ assistance, child protection and family law. Up to 90% of the FVPLS program’s clients are women.

“The FVPLS program supports thousands of Aboriginal people every year who have complex legal and other issues. But the program remains chronically under resourced and as a consequence Aboriginal women and their children are marginalised and at high risk of violence,” said Ms Braybrook.

With Aboriginal women up to forty-five times more likely to experience family violence across Australia and thirty times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of violence, the lack of services for this vulnerable group will have devastating consequences for the women and children in their care. “While we welcome the additional funding to ATSILs, the vast majority of this funding will go to criminal justice issues, mainly involving men. So where is the “fair go” for Aboriginal women?” asked June Oscar, CEO of FVPLS service Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women’s Resource Centre.

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Media Release