



**NATIONAL
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION
AND LEGAL SERVICES
FORUM**

MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

National Peak Body Calls for Community-Driven Solutions following Legal Service Closure

The cessation of critical community legal services in far west New South Wales by a long-standing Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS) has reignited calls for community-driven solutions and support for sustainable resourcing by the sector's national peak body.

"As the national peak body for the FVPLS sector, the National Family Violence Prevention & Legals Services Forum (The Forum) is deeply saddened by today's announcement that due to ongoing staff shortages and increasing costs of compliance, the Far West Community Legal Centre will cease delivery of its four services by July 31 this year," The Forum Chief Executive Officer Kerry Staines said.

"Despite their best efforts to continue to support Aboriginal women and children experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence across the vast far west of their State for almost 24 years now, the extreme pressure of retaining community-based legal staff and maintaining its compliance obligations has taken its toll and the Centre is no longer able to continue its service delivery," Ms Staines said.

"Unfortunately, these are common issues that continue to plague our sector and ultimately have the biggest impact on some of this country's most vulnerable communities," she said.

"What is needed to ensure that no woman or child goes without culturally appropriate legal and non-legal services in times of crisis, is an adequately funded sector that is community-driven, has access to resources required to deliver a sustainable service and is supported to ensure staff availability and retention."

The Forum and Warra Warra Legal Service staff are planning to meet with community leaders in the coming weeks to support them to deliver a plan of action moving forward.

"We are committed to ensuring that moving forward, the Far West Community Legal Centre can deliver a service that is sustainable and community driven, we are planning to meet with local community groups across the far west to discuss options and support local solutions for their communities," Ms Staines said.



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“Under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap, the Federal Government has agreed to four priority reforms that change the way Government works to accelerate improvements in the lives of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, committing to share decision making and working in partnership with communities to build the community-controlled sector. What is happening in the far west is a prime opportunity for Government to show their commitment to this agreement,” she said.

“The Forum continues to call on Government to recognise the important work of FVPLS services in our communities, and for additional resources and investment into our specialised expertise to deliver prevention, intervention, and recovery services to address domestic, family, and sexual violence in our communities.

“We need to urgently support these communities and call for immediate investment into the existing service that has been a part of its community for more than two decades, operating on a starved budget and very limited resources to support such an important issue.”

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For further information and media enquiries:
Lianne Brown, Communications Officer - NFVPLS Forum
E. lbrown@qifvls.com.au M. 0431 900 341

About the NFVPLS Forum

The National Family Violence Prevention & Legal Services Forum (NFVPLS Forum) was established in May 2012 and is the National Peak Body for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) around Australia that provide culturally safe and holistic services to First Nations people affected by family violence – predominantly women and children.

The NFVPLS Forum provides expert national policy advice in areas of policy, planning and law reform, and advocates for safety and justice for First Nations people affected by family violence.