



FIRST NATIONS
ADVOCATES AGAINST
FAMILY VIOLENCE



The First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence 25-26 Pre-Budget Submission



Contents

About the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence.....	3
First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence 2025-26 Pre-Budget Submission	5
1. Introduction	5
2. Early Intervention and Prevention	6
3. Funding for sector	10

Acknowledgement of Country

First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of all lands and waters across Australia. We wish to pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to the youth, for the future. We extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reading this Submission.

About the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence

Until the 1st of July 2024, [*First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence*](#) (FNAAFV) was known as the National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (NFVPLS) Forum. FNAAFV is the only National Peak Body Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) that supports Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS) around Australia who provide specialised domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) supports through culturally safe, holistic services to First Nations peoples – predominantly women and their children. FNAAFV provides expert national advice in areas of policy, planning and law reform, sector capacity building, supporting innovation and best practice, and advocating for safety and justice for First Nations peoples affected by family violence. We collaborate across all sectors, both ACCO and mainstream with the aim of delivering safety and supporting self-determination for our First Nations peoples in line with [*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#).

FNAAFV represents 16 FVPLSs, with 14 FVPLSs who are members of FNAAFV. The FVPLSs span more than 30 office locations across all jurisdictions. FVPLSs provide culturally safe and specialist legal and non-legal family and domestic violence assistance to more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. FNAAFV members include:

- Aboriginal Family Legal Services Western Australia (Perth Head Office, Broome, Carnarvon, Kununurra, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland)
- Aboriginal Family Legal Services Queensland (Toowoomba Head Office, Roma, Murgon and Gympie)
- Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Forbes)

- Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit Aboriginal Corporation (Alice Springs Head Office, Tennant Creek)
- Djirra (statewide service with head office in Melbourne and 8 regional offices in Bairnsdale, Warrnambool, Bendigo, Echuca, Shepparton, Morwell , Melton & Mildura)
- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (Port Augusta Head Office, Ceduna, Pt Lincoln)
- Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Kempsey Head Office, Grafton)
- Marninwarnitkura Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Fitzroy Crossing)
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Domestic and Family Violence Service (Alice Springs, NPY Tri-state Region)
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (Cairns Head Office, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Bamaga, Thursday Island and Brisbane)
- Thiyama-li Family Violence Service Inc. NSW (Moree Head Office, Bourke, Walgett)
- Warra-Warra Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Broken Hill)
- North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service (Darwin Head Office, Katherine)
- SiSTAS (Hobart Head Office, Tasmania)

FNAAFV works with its members, communities, governments, and other partners to raise awareness about family violence affecting First Nations people, and it also advocates for culturally safe legal and holistic responses to this issue. FNAAFV provides a unified voice for its FVPLS members in areas of national policy, planning and law reform, and representation as a member of the national Coalition of Peaks. FNAAFV's work is informed by evidence, and we aim to ensure that all strategic planning and policy positions link to the Closing the Gap Agreement and Priority

Reforms; National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children and associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025.

First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence 2025-26 Pre-Budget Submission



1. Introduction

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia continue to face disproportionate rates of domestic, family, and sexual violence (DFSV), an enduring legacy of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, systemic discrimination, and entrenched socio-economic disadvantage. Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLSs), operating as specialist, community-controlled organisations, are established and embedded in their communities, providing local solutions and critical services to address this crisis. They play an indispensable role, not only in providing legal assistance and crisis support to victim-survivors, but in delivering holistic, culturally safe, trauma-informed responses that enhance community wellbeing and resilience. However, while the existing National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) agreement—and the new National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP)—acknowledge the importance of both legal and non-legal supports, there remains a stark gap in consistent funding for early intervention and prevention programs delivered by FVPLSs. This is a critical omission, given the centrality of early intervention and prevention work in reducing violence, promoting safety, and fostering long-term change.

FNAAFV, representing FVPLS members nationally, urges the Government to address this shortfall. Specifically, we call for dedicated funding streams to support robust, culturally tailored early intervention and prevention activities. Investment in this area is not only ethically imperative but also

cost-effective, contributing to safer communities, healthier family environments, and fewer people requiring crisis-level interventions in the future.

2. Early Intervention and Prevention

Why Early Intervention and Prevention Matters

At its core, early intervention and prevention work aims to break the cycle of violence, experienced disproportionately by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, before it escalates. This approach seeks to address underlying drivers of DFSV, including gender inequality and racism, intergenerational trauma, poverty, substance misuse, housing instability, and a range of mental health and wellbeing challenges. By engaging with children; young people; Elders; women and men; sistaboy and brothagirls; families; people with lived experience; people who face intersectional discrimination; and the broader community, through culturally grounded education, positive parenting initiatives, and community awareness programs, FVPLSs strive to change attitudes, behaviours, and norms that perpetuate harm.

This approach aligns closely with Indigenous knowledges, practices and worldviews. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have long understood that healing and transformation must begin at the grassroots level – supporting families to thrive, strengthening cultural identity, and restoring connection to Country, language, and kinship networks. Early intervention strategies, rooted in cultural traditions and led by First Nations communities themselves, offer a sustainable and empowering way to prevent violence. They create pathways for healing that respect community-led solutions rather than imposing top-down measures.

A Critical Component of the FVPLS Model

While our FVPLS members have long understood the necessity of prevention work, their capacity to undertake early intervention activities is severely constrained by funding arrangements that favour crisis-oriented legal interventions. Under the current funding arrangement with the Commonwealth, FVPLSs are funded to provide legal and non-legal assistance to victim-survivors. Non-legal supports can include social work, case management, counselling referrals, and practical assistance to enhance a client's safety and wellbeing. Yet, these non-legal supports tend to be focused on individuals already affected by violence, responding to immediate need and risk rather than proactively preventing future harm.

What is lacking is a sustained funding stream dedicated to the kinds of community education, awareness-raising, capacity-building, and skills development initiatives that can halt violence before it begins. Without dedicated resources for early intervention and prevention, our FVPLS members struggle to consistently deliver programs that engage young people about respectful relationships, educate families on conflict resolution, or strengthen community-level capacity to identify and respond to early warning signs of violence.

Recommendations from the NLAP Review and other evidence

In February 2024, Nous Group prepared a Report on Data Collection for the FVPLS sector. In this report, Nous recognised that each FVPLS operates a unique service model aligned with their communities need, with all services working to address DFSV. Nous identified that FVPLS organisations provided more than just family violence legal services and that their provision of support, prevention and early intervention was more vast than what they were funded for.

The importance of early intervention and prevention was highlighted in the recent review of the NLAP by Dr Warren Mundy, which underscored the need for more holistic service delivery models that integrate prevention at their core. While the review's primary focus was on legal assistance, the logic extends naturally to FVPLSs. If legal assistance providers only enter the picture after violence has occurred, then the system remains reactive, placing an ongoing strain on crisis services and ultimately failing to disrupt the underlying patterns that fuel DFSV.

Research and practice wisdom from other jurisdictions and sectors similarly confirm the efficacy of prevention-based approaches. Numerous studies have shown that early intervention – particularly when culturally tailored and community-led – can lead to measurable reductions in violence over time. This not only saves lives and reduces trauma, but also diminishes costs related to health care, policing, child protection interventions, and social welfare. Prevention work, therefore, pays dividends well beyond the immediate community – improving the broader social fabric and reducing the long-term burden on government systems.

Enhancing Cultural Safety, Place-based and Community-Led Approaches

One of the distinguishing features of FVPLSs is their community-controlled structure, which places decision-making power in the hands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This ensures that early intervention and prevention programs are developed with direct input from local Elders, cultural advisors, young people, those with lived experience and community members who know best what works on the ground. The intersectional needs of those who have experienced or who are at risk of experiencing DFSV are also considered when FVPLS plan for service delivery. This approach increases cultural safety, strengthens trust, improves accessibility and ensures that their programs are place-based, resonating with community values and realities.

Culturally safe prevention initiatives can involve language-based education, engagement through traditional art and storytelling, on-Country healing camps, mentorship programs, and community yarning forums that foster open dialogue about taboo and sensitive topics including intimate partner violence, tech-based abuse, elder abuse and coercive control. By funding these activities, Government would not only invest in reducing DFSV but also contribute to the resurgence of cultural pride, the rebuilding of kinship networks, and the restoration of Indigenous authority over community healing processes.

The Need for Sustainable Funding

To realise the transformative potential of early intervention and prevention, FVPLSs require long-term, sustainable funding commitments. Ad hoc or project-based grants, while beneficial, often fail to support the continuity and scaling-up of effective programs. Sustainable funding would enable FVPLSs to build robust prevention frameworks, train specialist staff, develop evidence-based tools and resources, and conduct evaluation and research to continually refine and improve their approaches.

In short, without dedicated prevention funding, FVPLSs remain hamstrung – forced to allocate resources to reactive, crisis-driven responses. The result is a missed opportunity to prevent violence, reduce strain on the justice system, and most importantly, ensure healthier, safer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

3. Funding for sector

FNAAFV in partnership with our FVPLS members have undertaken a review of the service delivery requirements and costs to deliver early intervention and prevention programs, including into regional, remote and very remote locations.

This review identified a need for bolstering current educational and preventative services into existing locations; and a need to develop and deliver new services to both existing and new geographical locations. The additional investment required into the sector for early intervention, community education and prevention is **\$12,354,750 per annum or \$61,773,750 over 5 years**.

Our FVPLSs are experts in co-designing place-based service provision with their communities and understand the unique and complex relationships within. With increased investment into the sector of **\$12,354,750 per annum**, our FVPLS members will provide sustained, culturally appropriate early intervention, education and prevention programs aligned with the domains within the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (Prevention, Early Intervention, Response, and Recovery and Healing). With FVPLS spanning more than 30 locations across all jurisdictions, these services would be provided to more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations.

Furthermore, this investment will contribute to the achievement of the Closing the Gap (CtG) Agreement - Target 13 – *by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50%, as progress towards zero*; and demonstrate the Government's commitment to Priority Reform 2 of the CtG Agreement by building the capacity of the specialist DFSV ACCO sector.