

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

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Major Parliamentary report highlights importance of access to legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

The Commonwealth Government must provide adequate support to essential legal assistance services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, according to a major Parliamentary report. The Senate's Finance and Public Administration References Committee today released its report into 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience of law enforcement and justice services', which contained a number of important recommendations targeted at ensuring better access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the most legally disadvantaged group in Australia," said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum (National FVPLS Forum). "This important report recognises that increased funding to specialist legal services is essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children to access advice and supports to ensure their safety."

The National FVPLS Forum provided a detailed submission to the Senate inquiry and provided evidence at public hearings. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence and 10 times more likely to die of violent assault than other women.

"Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is a national crisis requiring urgent action", said Ms Braybrook. "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children face significant and unique barriers to accessing legal support in both rural/remote and urban areas. Specific recommendations contained in the report that funding needs to focus on community legal education and outreach workers to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are especially welcome."

"Our Family Violence Prevention Legal Services are frontline services that provide quality, culturally safe and holistic supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of family violence," explained Ms Braybrook. "The report highlights the value and importance of the frontline work that our services provide on the ground every day."

"Recent funding commitments from the Federal Government for domestic violence services are extremely welcome, however this report demonstrates that increased investment is still required to meet the extremely high levels of unmet need."

"Family Violence Prevention Legal Services must have adequate, long term funding to ensure that the high levels of unmet legal need can be met across the country."

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