

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

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 27 January 2015

110% commitment to family violence ignores lack of funding

The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (NFVPLS) is calling on the Commonwealth Government to back its commitment to the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, including Family Violence Prevention Legal Services. “Minister Cash said this morning that her Government is 110 per cent committed to an Australia where women and children are free of violence, but family violence services are facing closure under their watch,” said Antoinette Braybrook, Convenor of NFVPLS.

NFVPLS applauds the appointment of Rosie Batty as Australian of the Year and thanks her for her advocacy on violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. In her acceptance speech Ms Batty called for increased investment in specialist services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors. She said action is required to change the unacceptable and rising statistics, including a commitment to prevention and long-term secure funding for specialist services.

NFVPLS calls on the Commonwealth Government to make the commitments needed. “The National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children has violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as one of its key priorities,” continued Ms Braybrook. “Although symbolically this is very important, in reality we need secure long term commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to make a difference.”

At the same time as making these supposed commitments, the Commonwealth Government has defunded critical services, including the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Program which delivers vital legal services that ensure the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. Mainstream Community Legal Centres, also providing legal services to victims, have had their funding cut and many are due to close.

The Government blames this on the “budget crisis”. In practice they have thrown proven programs into upheaval, with funding cuts and processes that are wasting precious resources while organisations fight for survival. Violence against women is a heavy price to pay.

FVPLSs provides critical frontline legal and non-legal support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors of family violence, in areas including intervention orders, victims of crime assistance, child protection and family law. FVPLSs also undertake early intervention and prevention activities. Although FVPLSs are not gender exclusive, 90 per cent of clients are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

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